Start of Major GEORGE PEREZ Interview!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 86
Oct 2001

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

Final Pieces of the...
Whitman Mystery!

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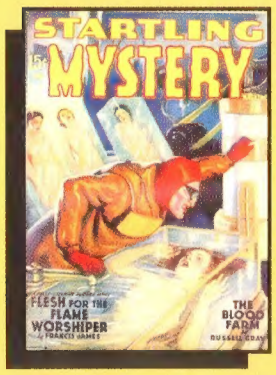

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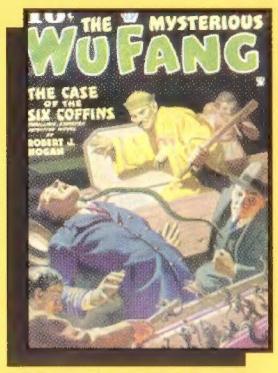

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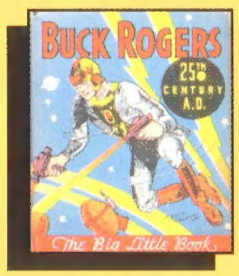

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Feedback Wanted!

You're reading the third issue of *CBM* to originate here in West Plains, Missouri. Three issues put together by me, Russ Cochran, with the help of my trusty crew. We're still green at this, but a few more issues under our belt and we'll be breezin' along with the breeze. We are going to try some new stuff in upcoming issues, more articles on artists like Frazetta, Foster, Raymond, Caniff, Chester Gould and Al Capp. We're going to try to give you a clear picture of the current market on collectable statues of comic book characters, because there are so many of these on the market now and they are a relatively new area of collecting. I'd like to print some nice color pictures of metal lunch boxes which feature comic book and comic strip characters. Some of these are rare and valuable.

We want to talk about Big Little Books, pulp magazines, newspaper comics (especially those from the 1930s through 1950s), all types of comic artists (both for comic books and comic strips), and we want to review new books about our hobby (see two reviews of the new Jack Cole-Plastic Man book in this issue).

The first major biography of Hal Foster has just been written, by Brian Kane, and will be published this October by Vanguard, whose editor, David Spurlock, is no stranger to this magazine. We plan to do a major feature, including reviews, on this new book in *CBM* #89, in December.

I "rode shotgun" for Bruce Hamilton in many cross-country drives, going to conventions, working on our Barks book, and being consultants to Disney. I have lots of funny stories to tell on Bruce (and he on me) in upcoming issues. (This will make him nervous).

Having been deeply involved in our hobby for over thirty years, I want to bring the widest possible variety to the next few issues of *CBM*...I am presenting these to you, the reader, and then asking you, "Well, what d'ya think?" And I promise to be guided by your response. Just take a look at some of these "new" areas of interest, and if the majority wants to have it expanded or dropped altogether, that'll be what happens.

Now don't worry! This does not mean that *CBM* will not continue to focus on golden age and silver age comic books! That will remain the main theme of the magazine. But all these other areas of collecting have a connection to that theme. It's up to you, which ones stay and which ones go.

I'd like to have an article written by a psychiatrist who is also a comics fan, about the relationship between collecting and OCD, which I think all collectors have to some degree. I know I've got it bad, and that ain't good.

Do you agree with me that the George Perez interview in this issue is too text-heavy, and in the future we should add more pictures to features like this? I loved to read the old *Life* magazine, and *The New Yorker* too, which are at opposite extremes as far as text-heaviness and the use of photographs is concerned. I'd like to strike a happy medium. And you?

So, please write me. Having been dragged kicking and moaning into the computer age, I now prefer to communicate via e-mail. Send your comments to me at russcochran@townsqr.com, and I will read all of them. This is your magazine, I'm just trying to run it for you.

Russ

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STEPHEN A. GEPPI
President and Chief Executive Officer

JOHN K. SNYDER, JR.
Chief Administrative Officer

RUSS COCHRAN
Editor & Publisher
cbm@gemstonepub.com

J.C. VAUGHN
Executive Editor & Associate Publisher
ads@gemstonepub.com

ARNOLD T. BLUMBERG
East Coast Editor
barnold@gemstonepub.com

PAT CALHOUN
West Coast Editor

BILL BAKER
JENNIFER CONTINO
MICHELLE NOLAN
MIKE WILBUR
Columnists

ED ROCK
Production Manager

PRICING & MARKET REPORTS
ROBERT M. OVERSTREET
Senior Pricing Editor

MICHAEL NAIMAN
Market Reports Editor
mnaiman1@home.com

MARK HUESMAN
Pricing Coordinator
feedback@gemstonepub.com

ADVERTISING
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BRENDA BUSICK
Creative Director, Ext. 404
bbrenda@gemstonepub.com

RESEARCH
JOE McGUCKIN
mjoe@diamondgalleries.com

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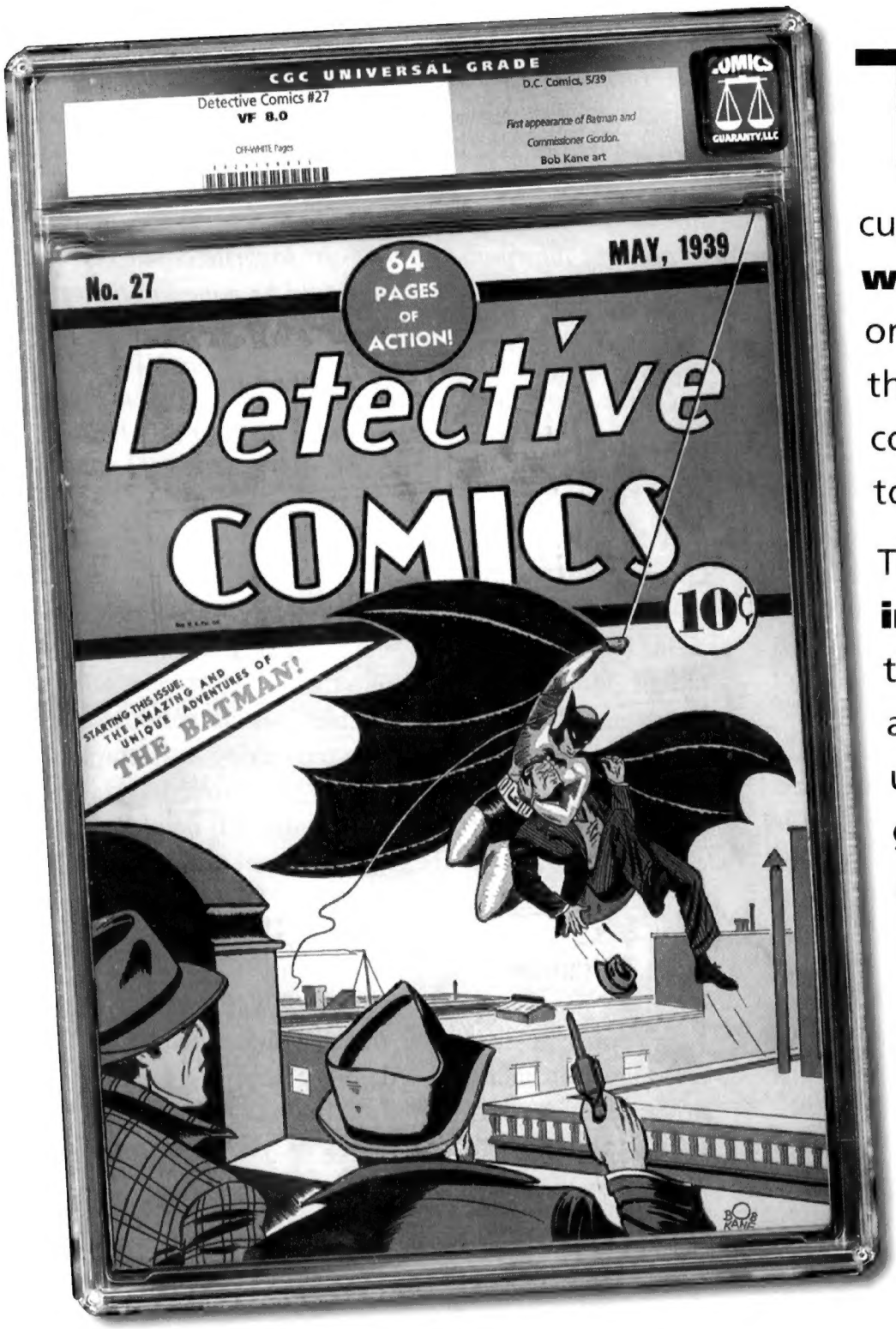

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Likes 'Art,' Not 'Strips'

Hello,I'd just like to put in my vote/opinion re: your soliciting input from readers for article subjects in the *CBM* #84 "Letter from the Editor." I don't collect original art, but I feel that it should be included in the *CBM*, as it is an important and cool subject. The only reason I don't collect it is lack of money :-)

But I must vote against your suggestion of articles on "the comics in the daily and Sunday papers." I don't see how this would get new collectors to buy your mag, if by new collectors you mean people under 50. I am 33 and have no interest whatsoever in the newspaper strips from the 30s, 40s, etc. (I would be interested in what the average age of a *CBM* reader is.)

Sure, old comics were strip reprints, but their time is waaay over and I don't collect them (or know anyone that collects them). The only reason they are collected is because they're old and hard to find, not because of the interior story and art (like the Silver Age gems). They have no relevance in today's world, and in fact some of them are considered racist and offensive today. They're better left out of *CBM*. IMHO. Thanks for listening,

Stu Cathell, Washington

Hi Stu...thanks for writing! There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to having more articles on original art, and we are working on several now. And about features on newspaper comics, I think you should consider this: virtually every comic book artist whose work you now enjoy got his inspiration from newspaper comics (as well as comic books). This is probably truer for older artists, like Frazetta, who grew up reading and copying newspaper comics, and who was inspired by Foster, Caniff, Segar, and others. And, the art form originated there, although it has withered to a pitiful state in comparison with newspaper comics of the 1930s and 1940s. The "golden age" of newspaper comics was, for most of us (and with some exceptions like Peanuts*), the decades of the 30s and 40s. Back then, a Sunday comic section might contain 16 to 24 pages, with many strips like* Tarzan, Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, Dick Tracy, Gasoline Alley, Little Orphan Annie, Superman, *etc., etc., running as full size pages. It is this period of newspaper comics that I would like to see some articles about. And just as our* CBM *writers are able to ferret out little tidbits of esoteric information about our favorite comic books, I think these same little tidbits could be mined in the area of newspaper comics as well. Tidbit-mining.*

That's what we do here! Let's hear from more readers out there...do you agree with Stu?...or would you like to see a few articles before you make up your mind? What newspaper strips would you like to have featured?

RC

Likes 'Strips"

I just picked up issue # 84, by the way, and it looks great. I'm looking forward to seeing what Russ digs up on classic comic strips because, other than *Hogan's Alley*, I'm not aware of any other magazines out there that look at the history of comic strips. Please pass along my compliments to all concerned that I think they're off to a fine start on the revived *CBM* and, of course, that I'll be pleased to do all I can to help with the revival. Thanks again!

Dave Blanchard, Ohio

Will's Testament

I just got a copy of the *CBM* #85. I was "blown away" by the professionalism you and the editors displayed. I am unashamedly flattered by the very generous exposition of my work. Not a little bemused by the picture of me with a full head of hair...and impressed by your choice of graphics. Thank you....

Will Eisner
via e-mail

Question Asked...

I have just got number 85 of *CBM*, and I'm very glad that it is being published again.

I read with much attention Peter Bosch's article "The Unknown Russ Manning," and found what I think is an

[continued on page 8]

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[continued from page 8]

evident mistake. Mr. Bosch says that "The Adventures of Bullwhip Griffin" was drawn by Manning *and* Dan Spiegle (note correct spelling). Well, I have that comic book, and I can see no trace of Manning. To me, that's pure, 100% Spiegle. Where does that Manning/Spiegle credit come from?

Also—Mr. Bosch and most "Unknown Manning" fans will be glad to know that Russ drew another obscure comic book in 1952. It was "New Adventures of Robin Hood," number 1 in a series of two giveaways sponsored by Robin Hood Flour and produced by Western Publishing. Manning drew a 30-page (two-tiered) story entitled "The Ghosts of Waylea Castle." Written by Don R. Christensen, it featured the Walt Disney-movie Robin Hood. Russ's style on that was similar to that he later used on "Rob Roy."

Alberto Becattini, via internet

...Question Answered

I regret to say I made an error in my article on Russ Manning in *CBM* #85. I had mistakenly listed "Bullwhip Griffin" as being a collaboration between Dan Spiegle and Russ Manning.

My mistake in judgement occurred because of the listing for the comic book in *Overstreet's Comic Book Price Guide* as Manning art. I had examined the comic in question carefully and recognized it as primarily Spiegle's work, but some of the inking reminded me of Manning, thus my collaboration *faux pas*. I have since confirmed the artwork was 100% Dan Spiegle. My sincere apologies,

Peter Bosch

On examining the graphics sent with the article, I was convinced I saw Manning's work in the posture and detail of the women's faces and heads, and discussed with Peter the spotting of blacks in the darker hair. Thanks for the info. The misspelling of Spiegle's last name is entirely my fault.

Ed Rock

Just Askin'

Perhaps you or a *CBM* reader can help me out with some information. Your recent issue on ACG comics reminded me of one of the best scary stories I ever read.

The story was called "The Endless Chain." In it, two boys go camping in the woods. As they hike along the road, they decide to hitch a ride. They are picked up by two men on a hunting trip. The boys get in the back seat of one of those old station wagons, the kind with wood on the side. Suddenly, the man in the passenger seat stares at them in horror. "Look," he says to the driver, "Look at these two boys..." The driver turns around and is equally terrified. "Oh, no..." he says, "it can't be..." The driver loses control of the station wagon and there is a terrible crash. Only the two boys survive.

The boys recover from the accident. They grow up, marry, and lead happy lives. Years later, still friends, the two men decide to go on a hunting trip. After a week in the woods, they head home. As they are driving along the mountain road, they see...

I can't bring myself to tell the rest, but I'm sure it's not too hard to figure out. Spooky, huh? I know this was an ACG story from the late fifties, but I can't remember what comic it appeared in. I roam the comic conventions, looking through the ACG boxes, but it's hard to find a single story, especially as I don't think it was the cover story.

Does any reader remember this story? Can anyone tell me what title and issue this story appeared in? I'd love to hear from you either through *CBM* or on email at calscher@hotmail.com.

Collin Alsche, via internet

Spider-Memories

Once again you've risen from the ashes, and I am thrilled the resurrection will be helmed by Russ Cochran, the publisher of Gemstone's outstanding series of EC reprints. I hope Pat S. Calhoun and Michelle Nolan will remain a part of *CBM*, and as a Frazetta fan I heartily welcome S. C. Ringgenberg's new "Frazetta-Phile."

Among the features in #84 was "Neglected Ditko," Nicholas Caputo's piece on Steve Ditko's underrated 1970s work at Charlton. Ditko is one of the grand old masters of the field and it is high time his Bronze Age efforts received more attention and examination.

Ditko had left Marvel Comics by the time I stumbled onto *The Amazing Spider-Man* in 1966. The first I ever saw was a Lee/Romita one, which was not a bad introduction! Later I came to admire Ditko's astonishing work on the first 38 issues. But the Romita rendition of the late '60s will always have a special nostalgic hold on me.

In #84's interview, it was fascinating to read Romita's recollections of the old days at Marvel. I was sorry to read that he felt largely unappreciated during his most productive years at Marvel.

Timothy M. Walters, Muskogee

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FANDOM PIONEER RONN FOSS SUCCUMBS AT 62

by Bill Schelly

Ronn Foss, ubiquitous artist and publisher who became a fan favorite in the early 1960s, died of natural causes in his home in the Missouri Ozarks on or about September 14th.

Born Ronald Eugene Foss in Defiance, Ohio on July 14th, 1939, Ronn (a spelling he never legally adopted) became active in comic fandom in 1961, and succeeded Jerry Bails as editor and publisher of the fanzines *Alter Ego* and *The Comicollector* in 1962. His artwork, which was characterized by a casual, sophisticated quality, graced many fanzines throughout the following years, including such prominent publications as *Rocket's Blast-Comicollector*, *Star-Studded Comics*, *Fantasy Illustrated*, *Comic Art* and *Sense of Wonder*.

His most famous amateur hero, The Eclipse (co-created with writer Drury Moroz) debuted in *Alter Ego*, and won an Alley Award in 1963. Other well-known Foss costumed heroes were The Fox, The Viper and Excel. He continued to publish various fanzines through 1985, including *Dateline: Comicdom*, *Pandora*, *Issues*, *The Stripper* and *Your Times X-Press*, a sort of *Mother Earth News* for the counter culture community in the Missouri Ozarks where he and his wife Coreen moved in 1975.

Many felt Foss was destined for greatness as an artist at DC or Marvel, but he consciously did not pursue work with the two comics giants, preferring to work for smaller, independent publishers like Fantagraphics/Eros and Last Gasp. In recent years, he had devoted his energies to the ongoing adventures of Destiny, Vampire Mermaid, his co-creation with editor Dennis Druktenis, in *Scary Monsters* magazine.

Ronn never regretted moving to his country cabin on twenty acres near Birch Tree, Missouri, despite living without a phone or running water. He was able to support himself by his art and writing for over twenty-five years, with only one or two spates of working for Russ Cochran in nearby West Plains doing art touch-ups on the EC reprint books. He was an enthusiastic, inveterate letter writer with correspondents far and wide, and a free spirit who lived his life the way he chose.

The difficulties of rural life, compounded by a lifetime of cigarette smoking, eventually took their toll. Foss was always thin, and in recent years had gradually lost weight and become increasingly frail. Finally, it seems, his body gave out. His last artwork was for *Scary Monsters* magazine, and his last letters were written to longtime friend and correspondent Richard "Grass" Green.

Ronn Foss was twice married, first to Myra at age 19 (no children), then in 1965 to Coreen Casey, with whom he had two children. Ronn and Coreen were divorced in the late 1970s. He is survived by two sisters, Beverly and Shirley, and his two grown children, Scott and Alexandra. Memorials should be to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

[Although Grass was always Ronn's best friend, Ronn was my *best friend for the first 20 of the 30 years I knew him (the last ten we were on the outs); I am privileged to add to the above facts the following truths:*

He could write as well as draw, and knew and enjoyed (and in some cases produced) not only comics and newspaper strips but music, movies, sf, pulps, radio and TV. Whatever I knew or drew, wrote or designed, shot or collected, he could best me; and then praise my *work.*

He was as prolific in the mundane as in the fannish, he painted signs, created costumes and makeup, made tools, toys and decorations of all types. He was interested in Creative Anachronism, and was an armourer.

We shared an interest in nonviolence, informed citizenship, spiritual exploration, personal freedom, the mechanics of shelter and survival and responsible consumption. We liked beatdom, hippiedom, fandom and self-expression in all areas.

He was my living link to popular culture from before my time, my partner in a million goofy schemes (many of which we made come true), arcane projects (many of which worked), long trips to watch four movies in a row, pointless discussions and up-all-nights with cigarettes and coffee.

Now, if ever... 'Let us sit upon the ground and tell sad tales...'

Ed Rock]

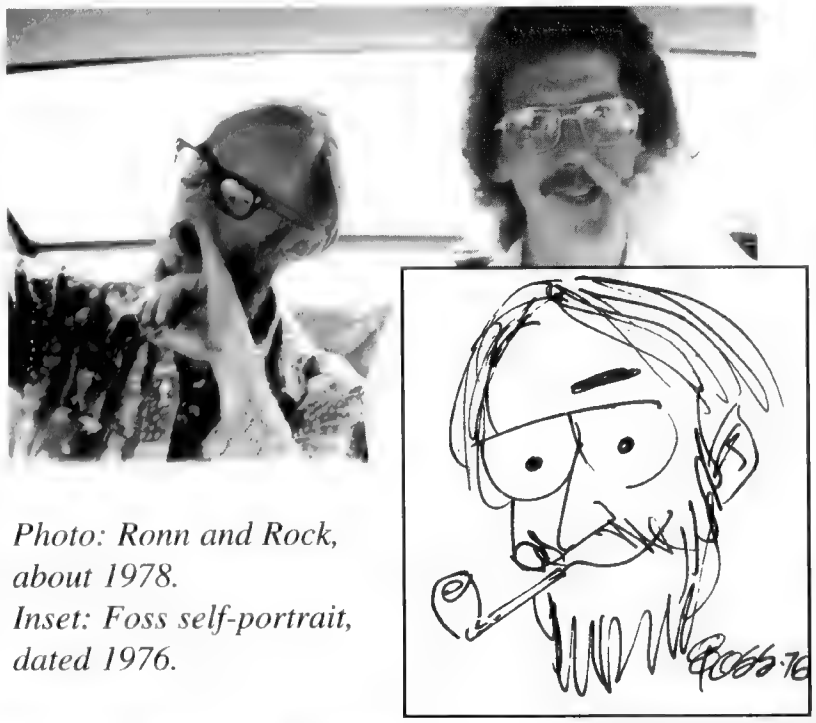


Photo: Ronn and Rock, about 1978.
Inset: Foss self-portrait, dated 1976.

PHOTO © 2001 NANCY STACEL DRAWING © 1976. 2001 RONN FOSS

A TRIBUTE TO... *THRILLING*

by Pat Calhoun

Looking back from today's rigidly defined (and ever-diminishing) comic book audience, it might seem hard to believe that during the Golden Age a great many titles prospered by offering a number of different genres wrapped inside one cover. The anthology titles of the era mixed heroes and humor, true crime and fantasy. These books were designed for people who liked comics, period. And these books—for the most part—were bought by males and females of all ages. Here, we're going to pay tribute to one such title, *Thrilling Comics*, from Better Publications, that during the post-war boom managed to lift itself from mediocrity to excellence.

Through the early 1940s Better did little to raise their comics above the average, perhaps due to their having been such a successful pulp publisher more effort went into maintaining that line. But after World War II, when comic sales were climbing and the patriotic efforts of the super-heroes had proved their point and served their purpose, changes were made to *Thrilling* and Better's three other pulp-inspired anthologies, *Exciting*, *Startling* and *Wonder.*

Firstly, and of paramount importance, cover artist Alex Schomburg created a new cover style—in many ways the opposite of the incredible but frenetic super-hero versus Axis images that had been his specialty. The new look featured jungle heroines on *Thrilling* and *Exciting* and sci-fi heroes on *Startling* and *Wonder.* These marvelous airbrush-enhanced masterpieces were presented with a minimum of blurbage and still rank high among the all-time best covers ever. (When *CBM* did a "favorite covers" poll *Startling* #49 won first place.) In a nod to the SF side of things Schomburg signed most of these works with the futuristic alias of "Xela"—his first name spelled backwards.

Thrilling #63 (Dec 1947) boasts a beautiful cover image of Princess Pantha walking the jungle with a friendly elephant and tiger. The stories inside are solidly supported by the revamped anthology framework but not yet developed to the peak they would attain the next year. Princess Pantha wades through a formula "greedy explorers out to loot lost city of temple treasures" yarn that's adequate but uninspired. That's followed by—with one of those radical genre "gear shifts" that make the mixed bag anthologies so much fun—the hillbilly hi-jinks of Looie Lazybones. Looie takes on the task of keeping Hogbite Holler from being razed and rebuilt by a couple of crooked contractors in seven pages rendered by old pro George Tuska.

Doc Strange—*Thrilling*'s former star—is up next, battling mysterious monsters in "The Swamp Beast." This red-tee-shirted do-gooder—one of the many Golden Agers who gained temporary super strength by drinking a chemical potion—drowns the first monster in a flood by busting open a dam. But a mad scientist gets the creature's corpse and makes a potion of his own that turns him and his two cronies into duplicates of the beast. As the three uglies head toward an orphanage Doc buries them in a landslide. Like all of Better's super-heroes Doc suffered from a lack of personality, but this is a

Thrilling #63 (Dec 1947) Schomburg's airbrush shading produced marvelous subtleties, especially evident here on the faces of the elephant and tiger. The presentation without speech balloons or cover blurbs helped the images achieve their masterful simplici-

pretty good installment enhanced by charming old-fashioned art.

The two remaining strips, "The Commando Cubs" and "Captain Eagle," are both holdovers from the War, readable enough but better designed to fight Nazis than crooks. Later issues would feature more intriguing replacements.

Thrilling #67 (Aug 1948) works the Xela magic with a spectacular Princess Pantha cover. And—living up to the publisher's name—the insides contain better strips with better stories and better art. The Princess Pantha tale is a nine-pager (up from seven) with mystery and suspense and detailed drawing by Gene Fawcette. Looie Lazybones contends with an archaeologist who comes to Hogbite Holler thinking the Tuzzlewits might be the missing link, with six stellar pages by young-but-already-awesome Frank Frazetta.

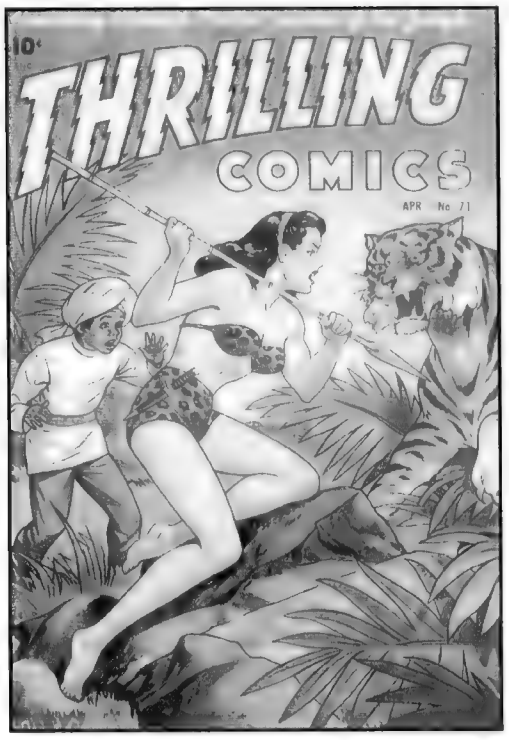
Then Kathy delivers the goods in an exuberant nine-page whirlwind courtship with the oh-so-rich and snooty Wellington Jones III. The art on this teen-humor classic is by the almost unknown (except by Jim Vadeboncoeur—thanks!) Mike Suchorsky, and it strikes a pleasing balance between cartoonish and lush. From there a quick U-turn brings us to six gritty pages of "true crime." The wrap-up is a 12-pager with one of Better's better characters—taken straight from their pulp mag—The Phantom Detective. When, one by one. three of four old friends are killed, the master of disguise must uncover the "Motive for Murder." It's a strong finish for a terrific issue.

Thrilling #71 (Apr 1949) may be even better; the Xela cover is certainly a winner. Princess Pantha gets the first ten pages for a Hawaiian adventure wherein an on-location movie crew accidentally causes a native boy's death when the child's father is blinded by reflected sunlight off a camera lens while trying to save his son from river rapids. And the director's young son is part of the crew. It's sentimental but elegantly rendered.

Then crime rears its head in "The Ghost Bandit," which is done well (if without surprises) and nicely drawn by Reuben Moriera. Kathy turns in a delightful episode as boyfriend Hank gets cold-shouldered for his non-appreciation of modern painting in "Art for Art's Ache." He tries to teach her a lesson by dressing up as a crazy Frenchman and painting a few pictures of his own, but the local museum hails his bogus work as the McCoy in a hilarious eight-pager.

That riotous romp is followed by Tara, the outlaw queen of space, who had been the cover feature for *Wonder Comics*. (Unfortunately, even though these titles had reinvented themselves and reached new heights, *Wonder* and *Startling* were canceled in 1948. *Exciting* expired later in 1949, and *Thrilling*, though it survived until 1951, suffered a setback with the conversion to an all-western format at the end of 1949.) The Tara tale is good stuff, full of space pirates and giant spiders, and it's fabulously illustrated by the under-appreciated Rafael Astarita. Throw in another Frazetta Looie Lazybones (in which Looie tangles with a traveling smoothie who comes courting Clarabelle), and we're talking about a comic that's a feast for the graphics gourmet.

Though the early 1950s were comics' biggest years, the anthologies were fading in importance. Not only was the industry shifting to more specifically targeted audiences, but the page count reduction from 48 to 32 cut down on the amount of variety possible in one book. Still, it's thrilling to watch *Thrilling* go out in a blaze of glory.



Thrilling #71 (Apr 1949), this handsome effort was the last Pantha/Xela/airbrush cover for the title; in a "Better" world there would have been many more, but we're grateful for the ones we have

Thrilling #67 (Aug 1948), it seems hardly necessary to speak of Xela's command of anatomy, when Princess Pantha says it so eloquently on this outstanding airbrush cover; the parrot provides a nice triangulation of focus

When Little Girls were Big in Comics

Li'l Jinx and *Tuffy* Typify Short-Run Fun

by Michelle Nolan

Do you, like me, get a kick out of collecting obscure short runs of old comics? If you like gentle humor, short-run fun doesn't get much better than the six issues of *Li'l Jinx* from Archie Publications in 1956-57 and the five issues of *Tuffy* from Standard Comics in 1949-50.

Baby Boomers who grew up with the beloved Archie Series comic books probably will recall Li'l Jinx for her appearances—drawn by Joe Edwards during the 1950s—in a variety of titles for a period of more than 25 years, beginning with *Pep Comics* #62 (Jul 1947). Not many collectors, however, will recall the seldom-seen run that began with *Li'l Jinx* #1 (Nov 1956) and oddly continued with #12 (Jan 1957) through #16 (Sep 1957). Ironically, the series was discontinued in favor of the short-lived *Little Archie in Animal Land*.

Far fewer collectors are even aware of the existence of *Tuffy* #5 (Jul 1949) through #9 (Oct 1950), taken from the 1940s King Features comic strip by versatile *New Yorker* cartoonist Syd Hoff. As far as I know, these five thoroughly obscure issues marked the only appearances of "America's Funniest Little Girl" in comic books.

Both Li'l Jinx and Tuffy to some degree were versions of Nancy and Little Lulu, yet each had its own charming original characteristics.

The theme of the devilish/delightful little kid has been one of the leading subgenres in both comic books and strips for more than 50 years. *Peanuts*, of course, was in a remarkable class of its own for 50 years until the death of creator Charles Schulz last year, but *Dennis the Menace* (also 50 years old in 2000) and the older Nancy and Sluggo and Little Lulu are the unforgettable members of the little kid brigade.

Interestingly, *Li'l Jinx* predates *Peanuts* and *Dennis the Menace* by three years, but the *Li'l Jinx* strip was still only marginally original. The now-forgotten Little Iodine—created by one of the greatest of all true cartoonists, Jimmy Hatlo, for his 1930s comic panel *They'll Do It Every Time*—was generally considered the epitome of feisty little femmes for many years. Little Iodine earned her own comic strip in 1943 and sold well for Dell Comics throughout the 1950s.

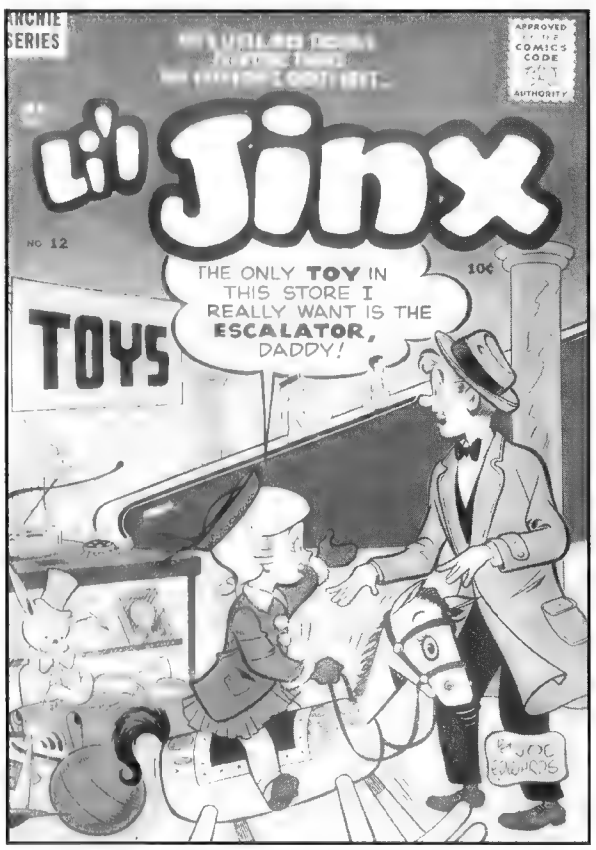
The antics of Li'l Jinx were vastly overshadowed in the 1950s and 1960s by the likes of Harvey's *Little Dot*, *Little Audrey* and *Little Lotta*, all of which enjoyed long, successful runs, and there were plenty of other shorter-lived and lesser-known little girl strips.

Li'l Jinx, though, is my favorite, perhaps because I recall buying that first issue off the stands during the late summer of 1956, and Li'l Jinx just seemed wacky and pleasant enough to be delightfully different.

The first issue of *Li'l Jinx* features a great sight gag—our heroine is offered an elaborate, multi-colored sundae and decides on a "chok'lit mike shake" instead as the soda jerk blows his stack.

The interesting aspect of *Li'l Jinx* stories was that they were totally unpredictable, featuring a mixture of sentiment and sadness. For example, the four full stories in #1 featured two happy endings (one involved a babysitter and the other the parents of Li'l Jinx) and two unhappy endings (both involving punishment).

By 1956 Li'l Jinx had become a cute four-year-old. In 1947, though, she began life in a crudely-produced Edwards strip as the eight-year-old tomboy to end all tomboys, the daughter of the oft-befuddled Bill and Merry

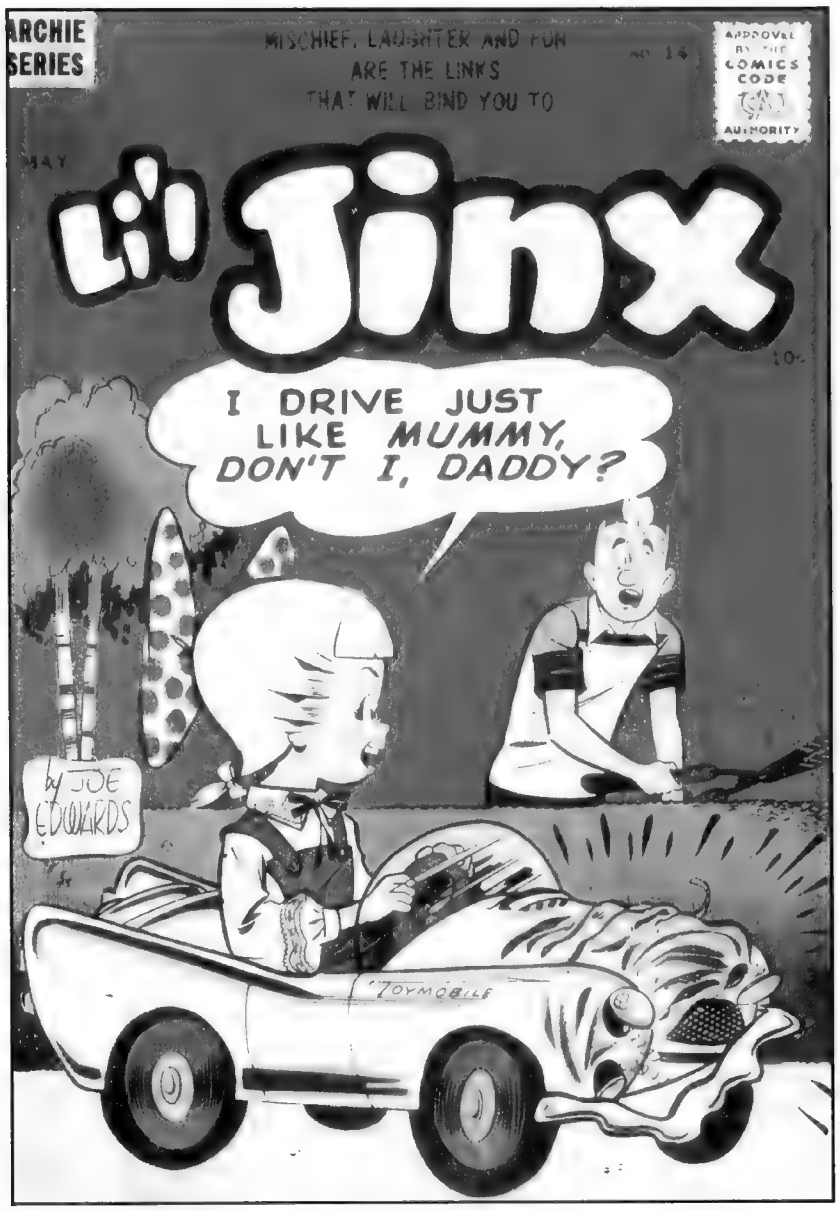


Li'l Jinx #12 (the second issue, Jan 57) may be more rare than you think

Bubblegum. In that first story, her father is rewarded by his boss—and Li'l Jinx's father rewards her—for turning "that sissy son," as the boss put it, into a baseball player with a black eye.

I have no idea why Archie switched to #12 for the second issue of *Li'l Jinx*. I do remember being confused by this, the way so many pint-sized Baby Boom collectors with a head for numbers were by the utterly arcane comic book numbering systems often used during the 1950s. However, I never saw this issue on the newsstands—the next issue of *Li'l Jinx* I remember seeing first-hand was #13.

At any rate, it took me forever to find #12—more than 15 years after I began to look for it in the early 1980s—and I consider it one of the scarcest of all Comics Code 1950s comics. It is pictured in the *Gerber Photo-Journal* along with #1 and #13, with all six issues of *Li'l Jinx* given a scarcity rating of 4—just a little scarcer than average. Although I've always credited the *Photo-Journal* with excellent efforts in general, I couldn't disagree more with these scarcity ratings for *Li'l Jinx*. I believe they all deserve 5s or 6s. How many of you have ever owned or even seen a *Li'l Jinx* #12? Believe me, this is one tough book to find!


ARCHIE SERIES
MISCHIEF, LAUGHTER AND FUN ARE THE LINKS THAT WILL BIND YOU TO
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MAY
Li'l Jinx
I DRIVE JUST LIKE MUMMY, DON'T I, DADDY?
by JOE EDWARDS
TOYMOBILE

Li'l Jinx #14 (real #4, May 57); is it politically incorrect, or sexist...you decide!

Issue12 is also one of my favorite 1950s covers, possibly because some of my favorite childhood memories are of riding escalators in big department stores in Seattle and San Francisco. On this cover, Li'l Jinx tells her father as she rides a rocking horse in the toy department, "The only toy in this store I really want is the escalator, Daddy!"

What youngster couldn't relate to that?

In this issue, Li'l Jinx's long-suffering father receives all the unintentional punishment after a variety of behind-the-scenes misdeeds by our young heroine.

The remaining four issues continued to follow the theme of unpredictability. Edwards also produced some charming seasonal puzzle and activity pages, and dozens of the street addresses of pen pals were listed with every issue in a feature similar to Katy Keene's. In fact, in issue 13 (Mar 1957), pen pals were listed on three separate pages, with more than 150 names included! I always wondered why *Katy Keene* and *Li'l Jinx* included pen pals but the Archie titles did not.

More than 200 pen pals were listed on four pages in #14 (May 1957). The same was true in #15 (Jul 1957), followed by more than 150 in #16 (Sep 1957). Along with more than 100 listed in #11 and #12, it meant that more than 800 youngsters had their names and addresses printed in the six issues of *Li'l Jinx*! Can you imagine anything like that being done today?

The Li'l Jinx pen pal club began shortly after her first appearance in *Pep Comics*. I would estimate that over the years more than 5,000 youngsters had their names listed under Li'l Jinx's urging to "pick out the ones who are your age and write to them."

By the way, Edwards gradually began to draw Li'l Jinx not only better—with more of a polished Dan DeCarlo look—but also younger, so that by the 1952-54 issues of *Pep Comics* she began to resemble the "true" Li'l Jinx. I wonder if this was in response to the huge success of *Dennis the Menace* and *Peanuts*?

In *From Girls to Grrrlz*, the ground-breaking 1999 book on the history of girls in comics, author Trina Robbins revealed that Edwards created Li'l Jinx following a suggestion by MLJ editor Harry Shorten. Edwards based the character on his own children and took the name from his army newspaper strip entitled *Private Jinx*.

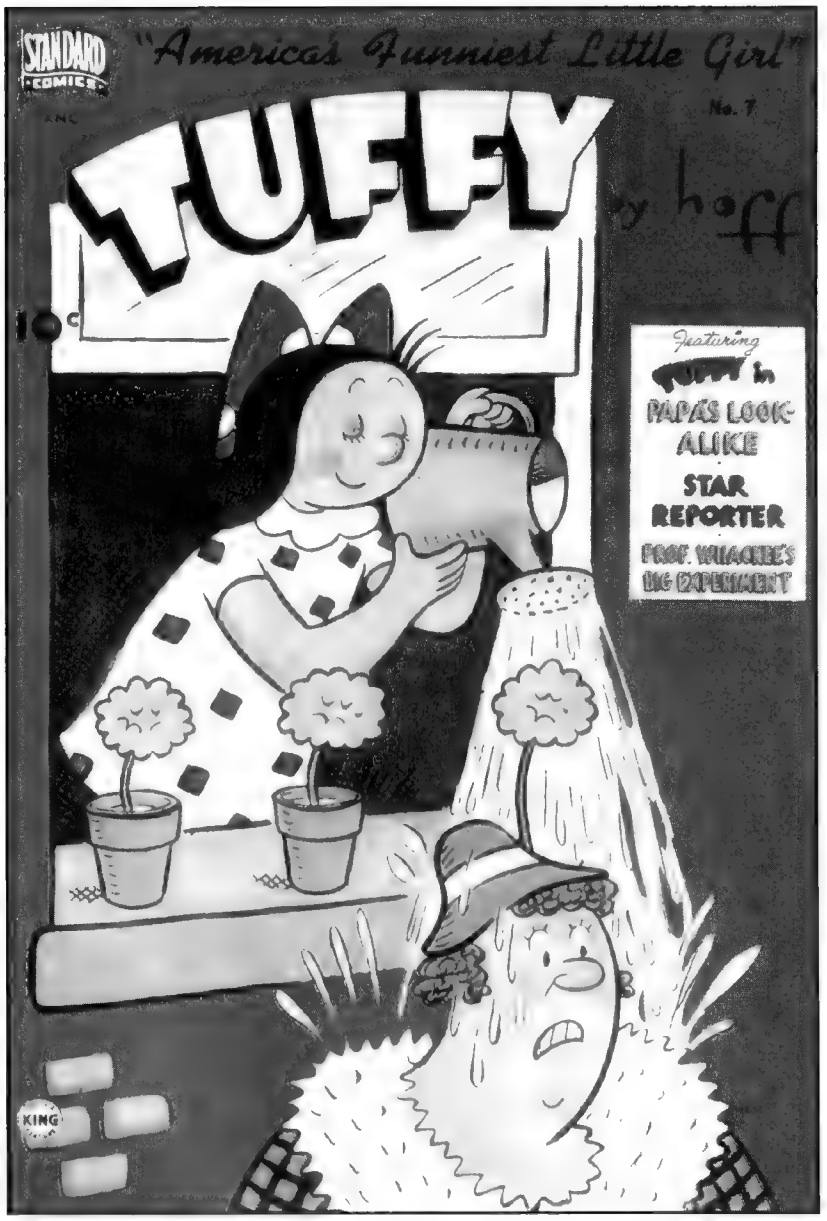
Now for the much lesser known and charmingly named Tuffy Tiffle, one of the most underrated of all girls comic strips.

In contrast to what I consider to be the inaccurate scarcity ratings for *Li'l Jinx*, I feel the *Gerber Photo-Journal* is dead-on with ratings of 6 for all five issues of *Tuffy*. The only one not shown in the *Photo-Journal* is #7 (Mar 1950), although I'm not sure if that issue is scarcer than any of the other four.

Tuffy is long-forgotten, relegated to only a few lines in most histories of the comic strips. Yet in one of the first books

on the subject, Coulton Waugh's *The Comics* (1947), Waugh was so taken by the strip—then running daily in the long-defunct daily *New York Journal-American*—that he wrote the following paen: "This is a strip the writer would select as one to be long with us—that is, among the newer strips."

Alas, Tuffy didn't last much longer in either comic strip or book form.



At right, **Tuffy** #7 (Mar 1950), the real #3 is a rare issue, and not in **Gerber**; above, **Tuffy** #8 (Jul 1950) was the real #4

Tuffy, a girl with a huge butterfly hair ribbon and the daughter of parents both chubby and dowdy, was a combination of fantastic whimsy and big-city realism. This was typified by the three full stories in #5 (Standard often began with first issues numbered "5")—"Tuffy and the Homework Bird," "Tuffy Meets One Syllable" and "Tuffy the Working Girl."

Most pages throughout the five-issue run consist of 12 panels, which I believe was Standard's way of stringing together the original four-panel strips. As a result, the stories seem a bit disjointed, but they can still be followed.

I especially like the story in which Tuffy meets the country boy One Syllable, named after his speech pattern (with apologies to Chester Gould, perhaps). "I asked One Syllable to tell me all about atomic power," Tuffy says, "But all he said was—Boom!"

One of my favorite Tuffy stories is "Tuffy and Papa's Look-Alike," when Tuffy brings home a dog with her father's face (complete with mustache). In the final panel, Pop complains about the dog because Tuffy brings it Papa's pipe and slippers.

The best of all Tuffy stories appears in #8 (Jul 1950). In this cute and surprisingly humanistic 12-page epic, Tuffy meets a new girl in the neighborhood—Clee O'Patra. She's so pretty that all the other girls worry about their chances with the boys, but Tuffy soon learns from Clee O'Patra that she is terribly unhappy because everyone is calling her the "bow-wow girl," since "no boy can look at me without getting a case of puppy love!" After knocking every boy she sees in dozens of panels for a loop, Clee O'Patra finally finds one who can stay on his feet while *she* falls into a daze. His name, of course, is Marr Kanthony.

In large part because of their origins in newspaper comics, these Tuffy stories can be read on two levels. They are a wonderful mix of satire and whimsy as well as stories that any young child would enjoy. I can see why author Waugh regarded Tuffy so highly because of Hoff's amusing combination of writing and art. The strip, though, had a very dated feel even in the late 1940s. In contrast, comics like *Dennis the Menace* and *Little Dot* were perfect examples of 1950s humor in *Leave It To Beaver* environments.

I feel badly because these types of comics are unavailable to youngsters now—and even more badly because there aren't enough youngsters buying comics to make these charming titles financially feasible!

By the way, it took me more than 15 years to find a complete set of all five issues of *Tuffy*. There are several other short-lived titles that I'm still trying to finish, in part so I can share their joys with you.

Which short-run series do you treasure most? If there are any you would like to see spotlighted here, let *CBM* know. Until then, keep having short-run fun!

MAKING THE MARVEL MASTERWORKS

Perhaps best known these days as the editorial captain of many of the flagship titles bearing the Marvel Comics masthead, Tom Brevoort has also been an important player behind the scenes in a years-long campaign to resurrect of one of the most beloved—and, as many might say, historically important—reprint series published by the House of Ideas. Recently, all those efforts paid off with the release of a new Masterworks volume collecting some of the best work by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby on The Fantastic Four. Overjoyed with this development, which was leavened with the realization that sales of this new edition had to show solid support for this reprint program, fans of this vital material have since then waited with bated breath to see if there would be more Masterworks forthcoming...

Well, we can all breath a bit easier now. Marvel has just announced plans to release the next batch of these mighty masterpieces, and there's rumblings of yet more to follow. Tom Brevoort took a few precious moments from his increasingly crowded schedule to give us all the details on what classic tales we can expect to see in the near future, outline what it takes to put one of these hefty editions together, and provide more than a few reasons why, if you love this kind of reprint, you should make sure to let your local comic shop or book store know that you'll be there, money in hand, when they hit the shelves.

Comic Book Marketplace: How did you end up becoming the Masterworks editor, and what are some of the unique challenges that position presents to you?

Tom Brevoort: I became the current Masterworks editor by being the last Masterworks editor. I edited Volumes 16 to 27 of the series, back in the early '90s, when it reached it's then-temporary end. And, ever since, I've been looking to juggle numbers and whatnot to be able to do more, because I always liked the Masterworks. I like the old material; I like these big, hardcover collections of these classic tales. I just like this stuff, and I had a hankering to do more.

So, year in and year out, we would juggle numbers. We'd go back and forth with people, and the demand out there would grow until the powers-that-be finally said, "OK, let's try one and see what happens. Let's see if there is, actually, enough of a market out there to do these on a more regular basis."

So we did the new Fantastic Four volume last year, and it did pretty well. So, this year we're doing three more. And additionally, as a sort of side benefit that helped the program, the new powers-that-be came in and revamped Marvel's trade paperback collections program. And in that context, doing a lot more Masterworks makes a lot more sense, so next year they'll be even more of them.

In terms of challenges, these days the biggest challenge is finding the materials! [Laughter] As Marvel went through lean times in the middle '90s, upkeep on our reproduction warehouse wasn't always a high priority. So, you get stories that were sent out overseas to be reprinted in foreign editions, or whatnot, that never made their way back. Or stories would make their way back and they wouldn't be filed back into their appropriate slot in the warehouse, they'd just be in a stack somewhere. That was always a problem with [doing] the Masterworks to a degree, but now even more so.

So, really, the biggest challenge is finding workable copies of these stories to be able to print in this form.

CBM: You mentioned that there's going to be three more volumes coming out this year?

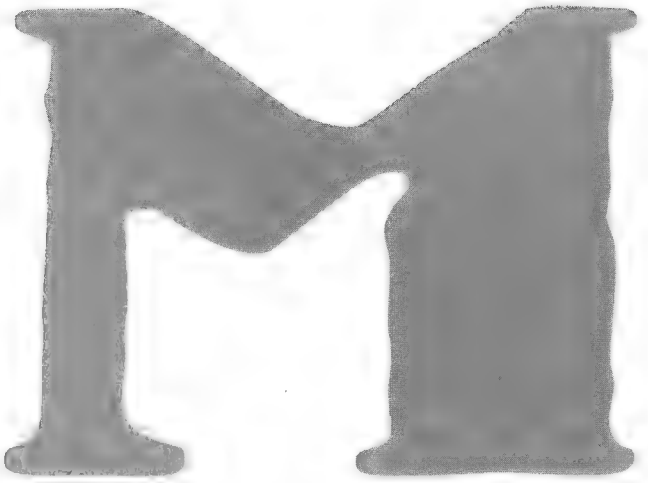
Brevoort: Yes.

CBM: What will those be?

Brevoort: By [saying], "This coming year," I'm actually cheating a little bit, because one of them got bumped into the very beginning of 2002. But in October, we're releasing a collection of *Daredevil*, numbers 12 through 21,

Tom Brevoort on Reviving the Marvel Masterworks Reprint Series

an interview conducted by Bill Baker



which is all of the Stan [Lee] and John Romita, Sr. *Daredevil* issues, and a couple of Gene Colan at the very end, some of which have never been reprinted.

Then, I believe in December, now—it was going to be in November, but I believe it's December—we're releasing Thor, from *Journey into Mystery* 111 to 120, and the first annual, which is all Stan and Jack [Kirby], and really is sort of the period where Thor started to move from being a strip that was fairly earthbound to a series that had a slightly larger canvas that it was painting on. Not quite as large as it would eventually become, but you start to see the shift to a focus on more godly concerns, as opposed to "The Cobra's robbing a bank, I'd better stop him!"And then, in January or February, we're going to do original *X-Men* 22 through 31, by Roy Thomas and Werner Roth.

CBM: Will the "Tales of Asgard" shorts be included with the Thor volume?

Brevoort: Yes.

CBM: Excellent. Because, again, if you want to talk about cosmic and godly concerns...

Brevoort: Yeah, we've done that with the first two volumes [of the Thor Masterworks], although in the very first one, because of page restrictions, we had to leave out two "Tales of Asgard." I stuck them in subsequent volumes. But, basically, the way the book is set up, it's like you're reading the issue. So you get the lead story from 111, then you get "Tales from Asgard" from 111, and then 112 [complete] and so on and so on. Whole books.

CBM: Will you also be putting some of the older volumes of the Masterworks which are so hard to find these days and, even when you do find them, are often going for huge—even stupid—amounts of money?

Brevoort: [Laughter] Yes. The intention is to go back to press. I don't know what rhyme or reason there'll be to it. I suspect it depends on what there's a demand for, or what there might be a perceived demand for. For example, I would expect that, if we're putting new editions of the old volumes back into print going into 2002, you'll probably see an immediate focus on the five Spider-Man volumes, because there's a Spider-Man movie coming out.

CBM: Makes perfect sense.

Brevoort: But, yes, the intention is to get all the old editions back into print in new editions. I think it probably won't be more than one every other month, and it may be a little slower than that depending on what the market can actually bear.

CBM: Is there any possibility, you think, that we'll actually get to see a completed run of, for instance, all of the Jack Kirby issues of *Fantastic Four*? I only single out that set because I know that there's a real groundswell of support for such things, but it could easily be applied to other titles and artists as well.

Brevoort: It all depends on how well the volumes do, honestly. The reason that the Masterworks ended with 27 volumes back in '93 was that the numbers just weren't good, that they reached the point where they were losing money. And part of the reason for that, I suspect, is that it's a lot easier to sell, say, *Fantastic Four* one through ten to somebody than it is to sell *Fantastic Four* 21 through 30. That the further you go into a run, it feels like what you're really marketing towards are people who are trying to complete the whole series, and that somebody who is coming to the hobby, or has come back to the hobby recently, will see there's a volume of 21 through 30, [but] they're going to be looking for the volumes with one through ten and 11 through 20 before they're interested. So the further into the line we got back in the early '90s, the more sales tended to go soft as we either got to characters who were more second tier characters—your Doctor Stranges or Daredevils—or that you got further into a run, where you were doing a volume of *Spider-Man* 41 through 50.

So, really, it all depends on the fan reaction and the retailer reaction. If these are ordered well, absolutely. I'd love to do them all. In fact, just the other day I got a package from a Kirby art collector who lives in France that I ran

into in San Diego, who shot me full size copies of original art to two full issues of *Fantastic Four* and a smattering of pages from a bunch of others. So, if we do additional volumes, we'll have some very nice reproduction material to work from.

But the onus is really on the readers. If people want them, they have to make sure that whoever their retailer is—whether it's mail order or a store or whatever—make sure they know about it, and order accordingly.

CBM: Well, why don't you give us a quick walk-though of the making of a typical Masterworks volume?

Brevoort: OK.

CBM: You said that finding good repro material is one of the hardest aspects of the job, correct?

Brevoort: Right. Well, that depends. One of the first choices you've got to make is what book you are going to do, what are you going to collect? And that's usually determined by weighing a number of factors: What material is the best? What stories are the best? What hasn't been collected in another format any time recently? What characters are more popular? What media projects might there come about that might give a boost or spike to a particular volume?All of these various factors come into play as you're figuring this stuff out, and then you settle on whatever you think is the best choice.

So, for the sake of argument, let's go with the first one I did, which is *Fantastic Four* 51 through 60 and Annual 4. At that point, I contact Marvel's reproduction department in Yuma [Arizona] and I say, "OK, I need black and white stats for *Fantastic Four* 51 through 60 and Annual 4." With the Masterworks, everything gets newly recolored. We don't use existing old film, or the old dot screens. We recolor and re-sep everything. These days, I use the original book as the guide. So we try to match the original coloring, just with better separations and a slightly wider ranging palette.

So I put in my request to the reproduction department, and they go through the warehouse and they find whatever they can find. And sometimes they find everything, and sometimes they find assorted bits and pieces, and sometimes they find nothing. I also have lists of reprints. I'm pretty good, off the top of my head, at being able to say, "If you can't find *Fantastic Four* 51, it was reprinted in *Marvel's Greatest Comics* 35, so see if you can find me that. It was also reprinted in the *Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades* book, so let's see if we got stuff on that. And it was also reprinted in *The Very Best of Marvel Comics* in 1991, so let's see if we have that." I'm looking to find, where it is possible, good, strong, crisp copies in black and white of all these pages.

So we get the materials in, and then, if there are pages that either we still have nothing on, which has been the case a couple of times, or that are just not very good because—particularly in the reprint books—the stats that were shot in the '60s and '70s to reprint this stuff were often pretty muddy, and lettering closed up, and they were just kind of ugly. The other place I avail myself [of] is actually the fan and original art community. That, as I'm doing one of these and things are getting tough, I put the word out through a couple of places—the Jack Kirby mailing list, and some folks, like Richard Howell, that I know—and say, "I'm looking for pages in black and white of this. So, if you either own any of the original art and want to donate copies, or you have black and white foreign reprints in English, I need copies of this stuff. And you'll get special thanks in the book." And, usually, a bunch of people will step up if they've got stuff, and get me good, crisp copies of any of those pages.

If I'm still missing stuff at that stage, then you get into the toughest aspect, which is taking printed copies of the original books and scanning them, and filtering out the color to the point where you can get a good, crisp black and white [image to work with]. Sort of the electronic version of what Greg Theakstone does. And depending on the circumstances, I might call on Greg to help with some of this stuff so, again, you get the best possible black and white plate that you can of any of these given stories. In most cases, it doesn't require going that far. The very first time I've ever had to electronically restore anything was the Thor volume this year. Otherwise, there was some stuff I had to do back in the early '90s volumes, but everything else has been available in one form or another.

From that point, with a good copy of the black plate of any given story, I pick the best version. So if I have a copy of the page from the stats of *FF* 51, and the stats of *Marvel's Greatest Comics* 35, and somebody happened to send me in a copy from the original art, I pick the best one. Usually, if I've got a copy from the original art, that's the best one. If not, usually it's the first printing. At that point, it's scanned and set up as a computer template, and that file, along with a color copy from the original book, goes out to a separator to be separated. We get the color separations in as a proof, and I go over it, comparing it to the original page, and making corrections, and fixing mistakes, and so forth.

At the same time, I'm usually calling Stan or somebody else to do an introduction, if there are enough pages for it. And, depending on the amount of pages I have, versus the amount of pages in the signatures—because, as with all books, we're required to print in signatures of 16 pages—so, every once in a while, I have a couple pages left over in the end. I look around for any odds and ends that would make good supplemental material, whether it's covers that

were unused, or design sheets, or pin-ups, or whatever it is that would provide some additional added value to the package. And I get my hands on those, and those get scanned.

Finally, once everything is colored, and sepped, and we've dropped in the appropriate covers to the cover template, and changed the type, and proofread everything, and so forth, it all goes out to Hong Kong to be printed, and bound, and shipped. And [then] it arrives at a store near you.

And that's pretty much the process in a nutshell.

CBM: Wow, you make it all sound so easy! [General laughter]

Brevoort: It's not that difficult if you can keep track of this stuff, and if you've got a working knowledge of where a given story will be found.

The X-Men volume I'm doing now will be my last Masterworks. From there, the program will be passed over to Ben Abernathy and his trade paperback team. But Ben and I are in close communication, and fairly constantly there'll be a case where they'll send me an email, not even specifically about Masterworks, but about other trade paperbacks and other stuff, as well, saying, "Where can I find this? Where was this story reprinted? Was this story ever reprinted? Where can I get this?" And that's the real trick, knowing where to find this stuff. Sometimes you can get your hands on things, and sometimes it's not available.

CBM: What's the best aspect of the job?

Brevoort: [What's] the best aspect of [editing] the Masterworks?

CBM: Yeah.

Brevoort: Well, certainly the most fun aspect of Masterworks is when the finished book comes in. But, you know, it's tough to quantify "the best." I love all this material. I love these stories. I love the Marvel of that age, that period. I like getting them back into print.

When I was growing up reading comics, starting in the '70s, Marvel had a very active reprint line. Every major title had a reprint. And the reprint book wouldn't sell tremendously, but they were there. So at the same times I'd be reading George Perez Avengers stories in *The Avengers*, I'd be reading John Buscema Avengers stories in *Marvel Triple Action*. I liked that. It also helped [cement] the notion of the Marvel Universe as a universe with a continuous canvas on which events played out, and these characters had this history.

So I like being able to put these things back out, and get them back into print, because I liked them when I read them the first time. So it's all good.

Building a Better Cross-Over, Part One

Tom Brevoort on George Perez and the Avengers/JLA Cross-over

by Bill Baker

CBM: What was your first impression when you found out you would be working with George Perez?

Tom Brevoort: Well, I was one of the folks here who campaigned for George to do *The Avengers* [relaunch], because, to my mind, George is the greatest living superhero comic book artist there is. There's only one guy I would rank higher than George on my personal scale, and that would be Jack Kirby who is, sadly, no longer among us. So, George is at the peak, the pinnacle, of the game.

And I've been a fan of his [almost my entire life;] he drew the first Marvel comic that I actually bought, back in '77. He and I had worked on a couple of things over the years, and had a pretty good relationship, and so forth. So it was an exciting thing, and it was an exciting time, and I was hoping that we'd be able to put together some whacky magic.

George was kinda looking to re-establish himself. He hadn't done monthly projects in a good, long time—he'd mostly been doing special projects, and a lot of piecemeal work for the many companies that spawned up in the '90s. And he was looking to re-establish himself in a big way. So having him come back on *Avengers*—which, of all the Marvel series he'd worked on, was the thing he was probably most closely identified with—was a pretty natural fit. So it was an exciting proposition.

[continued on page 30]

THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

Part One of Four

George Perez interview

by Bill Baker

[Editor's note: With more than 20 years in the business, George Perez has illustrated—and in some cases written—most of the heavy hitters at Marvel and DC, including The Avengers, Justice League of America, Fantastic Four, The New Teen Titans, Wonder Woman *and a host of others. He quickly established himself as an artist who actually loves drawing crowd scenes and team titles, and he also quickly developed strong fan following.* CBM*'s Bill Baker interviewed Perez extensively about his many different projects, his work habits, relationships with other creators, and—of course—the forthcoming Avengers/JLA crossover from DC and Marvel. Part Two of this interview appears in next month's* CBM.]

Comic Book Marketplace: How did you get your start in the business?

George Perez: It was actually at a comic book convention. A high school chum had taken me to my first show, and it was the first time I would ever get professional criticism. Which was a harsh smack of reality, to say the least, since I was self-taught and the only criticism I had received [before] was from other schoolmates, which was nice, encouraging and constructive. And [then] I met, in the course of one of the follow-up conventions, artist Rich Buckler. By this point I had graduated [from] high school, and after unsuccessfully showing my work around to DC, when they were doing their new talent development program of the time. I [also had] showed my work to Neal Adams at Continuity [without any luck].

But, eventually, I would receive a phone call while I was working as a bank teller from Rich Buckler, who asked if I would be interested in an assistant job. It wasn't well-paying, but it was experience. And, eventually, after about half a year of that, when Rich and I parted ways, I had already done a two-page back-up cartoon for *Astonishing Tales* #25 which featured Deathlok, Rich Buckler's character, and I ended up doing the pencils for a "Gulliver of Mars" story for *Monsters Unleashed* that Rich didn't have a chance to actually finish.

So I started receiving phone calls for either Rich Buckler hand-me-downs, like the Fantastic Four annual, which was my real big break, or they figured, since I was always hanging around [the Marvel offices], to offer me books that were already in process of getting close to cancellation. I got Man Wolf, from *Monsters on the Loose*, during the monster craze, and *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* I got during the kung fu craze. Neither of those series was expected to last much longer, but I was gratified to find out [both] the series showed marked improvement in sales while I was on them. And Roy Thomas called up with the Fantastic Four annual when Rich Buckler couldn't do it, and thus I got my big super-hero break. And, since I love team books—at a time that there were no royalties involved, [and] very few artists wanted to do team books—when *Avengers* became available—George Tuska wasn't really interested in staying on the book—I lobbied for it and Bill Mantlo, who was John Verpoorten's [Marvel's Production Manager and an inker, himself] assistant at the time, championed me. And [then], with *Fantastic Four* and *The Avengers* already part of my schedule, Bill Mantlo informed me that there was an Inhumans bi-monthly that was in need of an artist, but it was already behind schedule. I don't know why it ended up that way, but I took that on and thus my reputation as a team artist was started at a very, very early stage in my career.

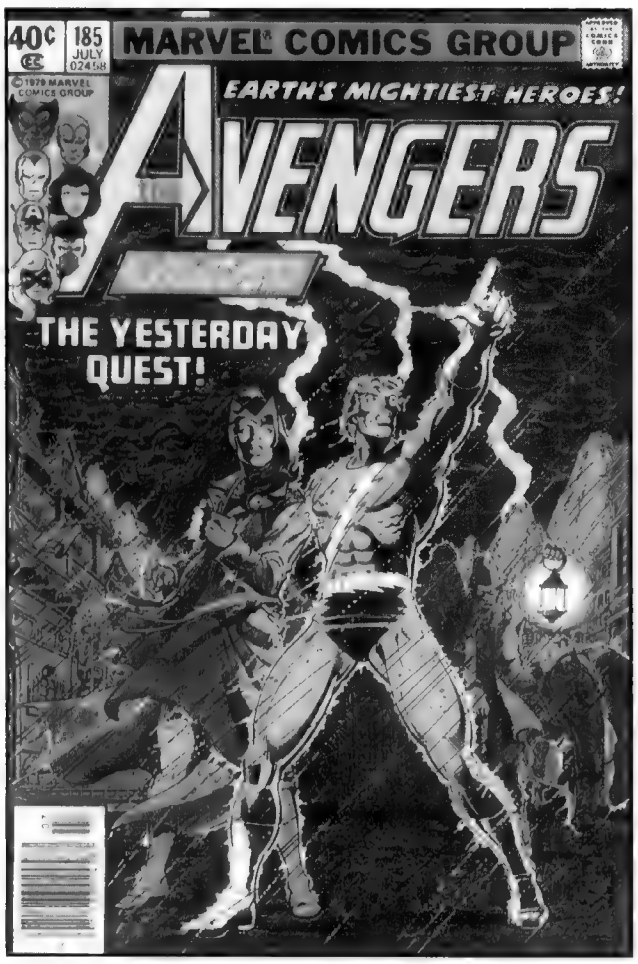
CBM: Did you have any trepidation or misgivings when you were first offered *The Avengers*?

Perez: I guess, being—at that point, I was like 20 years old—and being young you tend to be rather cocky, arro-

gant, and not a little stupid, you figure you're going in there with an attitude, you're going in there with a sense of confidence that sometimes your talent doesn't really warrant. So I went in there thinking, "I'm going to really shake the world up on *The Avengers*!" I look at the work now, from the point of view of a 27-year veteran, and say, "God, I was lucky they kept me working!" [General laughter] Because I see all the flaws, I see all the rough edges.

In *The Fantastic Four* I thought, "Wow, my work looked great!" I recently saw an original piece of artwork, and I could see where my pencil lines were, and where Joe Sinnott's ink line was, and how much Joe helped me by correcting things that needed to be corrected. I think that I should mention that [my] *Fantastic Four* [issues], artistically, are stronger than my *Avengers* because I had a stronger inker on *Fantastic Four*. Vince Colletta was the regular inker on *The Avengers*, and I don't think he and I meshed very well. And Sam Granger was a fine inker, but he always inked what was there. He gave a fine, pristine line, but all he did was make my weaknesses clearer! [General laughter]

So I was very lucky that the one thing I had was not only chutzpa, but a natural sense of storytelling and a real desire to do team books in an exciting manner. And I think that helped me get through the learning stages of drawing, because at least I wanted to do those books. Few others did. *Avengers*, after all, became an assigned book, not a book people volunteered for. *Fantastic Four* was an intimidating book probably more than *The Avengers* because, unlike the army of artists who worked on *The Avengers*, *The Fantastic Four* was pretty much a book that had been handled by very few artists. Of course, having to follow the legacy of Jack Kirby, who handled it for well over a hundred issues, [is part of it].



AVENGERS V1 #185
Consistently a fan favorite cover today even though it was illustrated 22 years ago, the cover for **Avengers** #185 was one of many collaborations between George Perez and inker Terry Austin. Interiors for this issue were by John Byrne and Dan Green.

So that one I thought was more intimidating because that had a unique stylistic approach that, if I hadn't had Joe Sinnott, I probably would not have made a positive impact on *The Fantastic Four*. [Laughter] I think Joe did a lot to help me out.

CBM: How did you guys work on those early *Avengers*? Did you have any input on the plot at all, or was it handled more in keeping with the classic Marvel method, with a strong writer-artist division of labor?

Perez: At that point Steve Englehart had pretty much ideas of his own. He would talk them out [with me], but the decisions were usually Steve's. Because I was a newcomer into this, and he had already been writing for a few years, and he definitely had his own bent on the book. So I figured my job was to make the action scenes as exciting as possible.

[But] Steve and I differed in how to handle the fight scenes. He and I discussed this and, since I was the one drawing it, I pretty much won out there. He liked doing fight scenes where the beginning of the fight and the end of the fight was handled in one seamless progression, and I was much more [of the mind that]—since I was doing a team book, and I was heavily influenced by old westerns with a lot of edits, of cutting away back and forth on the actions—[it shouldn't be as linear]. So you may see the beginning of an action, but not necessarily its immediate repercussion, because I cut away to another part of the fight just to show that, while this is going on, well, that is going on, in order to give a sense of everything happening all at once. It made, I think, [things] a little more of a challenge for Steve, initially, to write because I was taking a different approach than the artist that was working with him before. But, after a while, we found a rhythm. He worked to my strengths, and I tried to never compromise the story that he was trying to tell.

CBM: What were some of the other things that you might have disagreed about, or had to work out between yourselves, to achieve that rhythm? I ask because, once you guys hit that common stride, you really got going.

Perez: Some of them were subtle, and had nothing to do really with Steve. It was something that John Romita would then correct. Trying to stay on model, as far as characters were concerned. I was so influenced by Neal Adams' interpretation

of The Avengers, or Barry Windsor-Smith's artwork of that time, that I was probably being a little too stylistic, and since I was new, it's not something I would be allowed to get away with. [Things like] not making Captain America look quite right. Not having heights match. Again, I was revolting. I was starting to get the characters to look a little smaller, but the stuff I learned from Rich Buckler was what they wanted; they wanted the bigger-than-life characters. Certain quiet aspects of my art they wanted pumped up.

Actually, another correction, [a tendency] which they wanted me to cut out, 'cause I did do this in the early part of my career, I was, again, heavily influenced by wild panel designs, particularly by Gene Colan. And they wanted the page to be a little more conventional, with grids. I would then start breaking out of that a little, here and there, but not as many wonky layouts after my first issue. Because anyone who looks at my first issue, they'll see the fight scenes with a lot of diagonal panels. A lot of panels are in diamond shapes and stuff, I think what Gene Colan called "the stack of cards" approach to panel layout. And those are the things that I was learning as I went along, and taking advice from what has worked in the past and then trying to find ways of tweaking it.

So the great thing in working with Steve was that Steve was very, very imaginative. I was young enough, and naive enough, not to totally understand his big political stuff that he was doing with President Rockefeller, and his storyline with the Squadron Sinister. But I just loved the ideas. I thought, "These are really clever ideas!" I got to design a few more members of the Squadron who did not exist at the time. I just had a ball. I was drawing a lot of characters, a lot of costumes, getting to draw the characters that I loved—[and] hating having to draw Iron Man's nose at the time. [General laughter]

But it was where I wanted to be. This was my childhood dream, and here I was, barely out of my teens, doing exactly what I wanted to do.

CBM: After Steve left, who took on the writing chores next?

Perez: I think Gerry Conway came on.

CBM: How was that switch-over for you, and what did Gerry bring to the book?

Perez: I found Gerry to be a good craftsman. I enjoyed working with him as a person. I didn't think he was quite as imaginative or as daring as Steve. I think Steve was trying to do something that was not quite comics, that would go beyond what conventional comics was, and Gerry was trying to do classic comics. So there were certain things that just had a certain feeling of conventional approach. And I think a lot of it is more from me talking about it in hindsight.

The only thing I ever found problematic working with Gerry is that he loved sound effects, which is something that I never really cared for. Maybe I was prejudiced because of the Batman TV show, I don't know. But I just thought, "God, they just really get in the way of the artwork!" I mean, you spend all this time drawing. I can understand a word balloon, but there was one sequence in *The Avengers* where Gerry put a little caption saying, "Well, George has done this fight scene so great that we're not going to mar it with word balloons," and [then] he put big sound effects in there which covered up even more! [General laughter] Because that really gets in the way.

And I've had this discussion all the way [through my career], up to Kurt Busiek. I really do not care for sound effects. I work harder to make the action more dynamic in order to minimize the need for sound effects. But I also know that Stan was a big proponent of sound effects. He prided himself on creating these imaginative examples of onomatopoeia. You know, making this big sound, "Yes, this sounds like it should be!" But they were also enormous.

I guess, because I was doing a group book that had more characters to draw, I was a little more jealous of the amount of space that would be covered up, because I'd figure, "Well, somebody is going to get lost in that word balloon, or that sound effect." And, early on, and to this day, one of the things that was unique in my style is that I do a lot of panels [per page], so my panels aren't that large, so word balloons and sound effects take up a lot more space in relationship to any particular scene than it might for another artist. And that was one of

AVENGERS V1 #171
Another Perez & Austin collaboration, **Avengers** #171 spotlighted the Scarlet Witch, but plenty of other characters were visible as well.

those things that [drove home that] I had to start learning a little more, understanding the difference between detail and clutter. Sometimes I would put too many small panels unnecessarily, as opposed to doing small panels, but then give the eye of the reader a rest on the next page by having the panels a little larger, or a splash....

CBM: When Jim Shooter came on the book, did that change the creative dynamics much?

Perez: I was given a lot more creative freedom when Jim came on the book, because Jim had just come on the Marvel books and really was not as up on the background of the characters—he was working on DC books, he had been on The Legion [of Super-Heroes before that]. So he gave me freedom to add to the story. You know, how to connect A to C by finding a new way of doing B. And he would write his plot in longhand on a memo pad, as opposed to a typed one, so it was, you know, a lot of stream-of-consciousness stuff. And some stuff we used, some stuff we discussed. I mean he paid me a nice compliment once, when one person was pointing out all these great little character bits, and he'd said, "That's George's. That's George's. That's George's." [General laughter] He under-rated himself. There was a lot of great stuff that he put in there, as well.

But I think starting with Jim is when I got really a lot of freedom. Both Jim Shooter and David Michelinie, they allowed me to become the *Avengers* artist. I started making *The Avengers* into a book that didn't have as many of the influences of other artists, as opposed to, "OK, this is how I want to handle it." I developed, I guess, "the Perez style" of doing *The Avengers* around that time.

CBM: Right. It seems that that's when a lot of your illustrative influences and tendencies seemed to start really coming to the surface.

Perez: Oh, yeah. Then the detail really went to town, and without sacrificing the characters in there. The characters were big, but the backgrounds were lush. And the more complex, the better I liked it. And the more a story's outside the realm of reality, outside the city—like in outer space or mystical realms—then I would really start kicking butt. Because, "OK, now I can just design, design, design!"

I look at this stuff now and I say, "Oh, there's some great stuff in there! [But then,] look at this." I still had the nasty tendency of, every time I drew a city, if you look at a down shot, "Where the hell are the streets?!" You see buildings, but no streets. [General laughter] Little things you learn as you go along. You look back, and I think, "Oh, yeah. But it looks dynamic!" It's like a Kirby fantasy: It looks great. Architecturally, it probably wouldn't stand. But boy does it look great! [More general laughter]

CBM: How did "The Korvac Saga" come about?

Perez: Well that was Jim's and my desire to do a big, epic Avengers storyline. I mean, they're going to have to rise from the dead to win this battle! And the Guardians of the Galaxy? "Hey, these are characters I haven't drawn! More costumes, more characters! Hey, this is going to be fun!"

He wanted to do it in order to use me as best he could. I guess that was as close to drawing as many characters as Legion had, that he'd be doing on *The Avengers*. And then I had to double-cross him by going through personal hassles and everything else—my marriage was falling apart—and I ended up not even finishing the saga that Jim started with the intention of it being a big magnum opus from the team of Shooter and Perez. And I was gone. And that was the big regret [for me about] that story—like, unfortunately, too many stories in my career—I started off with all maximum strength, some of the best I could do, but for one reason or another, I just could not finish it. And that was my regret, because I think Jim and I were doing some really, really kick ass on that.

CBM: You two had really hit your stride, and were working very well together.

Perez: Oh yeah, oh yeah. "Tomorrow Ends Today" with the splash showing the Beast bouncing back and forth, and with Wanda and Captain America coming in, with all the machinery in the background, that's probably the most representative image of my Avengers of that day. That feeling of, "OK, look at all the detail. Look at all the characters bounding, charging right at you." And that issue showing the Helicarrier of S.H.I.E.L.D.—well, actually it wasn't the Helicarrier, it was the other platform they used at that time—and even strangely enough having the Two-Gun Kid. I mean, this was stand-alone Avengers work. This was my era. And, unfortunately, an era I that would not stay on to see to its fruition.

CBM: What were some of the other aspects of working with Shooter that were so special? What were some of the things that really made you two click?

Perez: Well, I think it was just the fact that Jim had great faith in what I could do. Jim trusted me to get it right, and I trusted Jim to make it interesting. I think we played up to each other's strengths. I didn't tell Jim how to write; he seldom told me how to draw. You know, he was a big proponent of storytelling, but that's something he didn't really have to tell me. Although Jim, at one point, caught me at a time when I was starting to make the characters a little small again. He was, "No, bring them out again!" It started getting too subtle to the point that he had to over-explain something. When a person is intense, he's angry, his

body should not look small, it should look large, so that the artwork says that he's ready for action as opposed to the script having to explain that. So he kept me on my toes.

I think since Jim was also editor by that point, the fact that he had enough power, at least I knew with The Avengers [that I could say that,] "Hey, if this guy says I'm doing OK, I don't have to worry about somebody else's [opinion]!" He's pretty much in charge of the whole thing for me. But the reason I had a grand time with him is, I think, the fact that—[and this is] what was most enjoyable—that he gave me so much freedom because he had so much faith in my knowledge of the characters to let me add more character bits [and,] as long as it didn't effect story, add new bits of business that may not have been there. Or, in some cases, change things, particularly if it [was] in an action sequence where I'd think, "Well, I've got these characters doing something, but this other character hasn't really done something, and I need to alter the action to keep this character important to the story." I always, in doing a team book, had to be aware of who everyone in the scene is, and where they are. So that, even though they may not appear for a page or so, I have to at least acknowledge their presence somehow, and that always becomes a challenge in a team book. Besides that, no one, in real life, just sits back and lets everyone else work if they're part of a team.

CBM: How about David Michelinie? What did he bring to the book that was unique?

Perez: Well, Dave was really similar to Jim. In fact, Dave just had a nice imagination. I just enjoyed doing some of the—I'm sorry, after so long they merge in my mind, the era between Dave and Jim, because they're both so close together in my mind, now—Dave was writing the stuff with Wonderman and the Beast, I believe that was during Dave's era, leading to the 200th issue. And, without sounding like I'm trying to shut David off, I really have a merged distinction with Jim, with the exception of "The Korvac Saga," and the time with Dave.

I think Dave probably worked on most of the *Avengers* stories prior to my departure from Marvel. I think Dave did Red Ronin, which I'd never even heard of the Shogun Warriors at that point, but Dave gave me something really big and interesting to draw. And I don't remember if it was Dave or Jim who did the Carol Danvers pregnancy story. I believe by the time it was printed it was by four different writers or something. That was probably not the most shining hour for the character, but I liked the idea that they had the kind of story that I really love, which was kind of a precursor to what I would end up doing in *Crisis* [*On Infinite Earths*], stuff where you could draw anything happening from various time zones. Like issue 200 of *The Avengers*, I got to draw a dinosaur attacking Avengers Mansion, with a biplane flying [by]. All this great stuff I eventually got to do with *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, I got to do with The Avengers.

The excitement was already rolling for me, and Dave was there continuing the trend, but I don't know if I can pinpoint what made Dave unique in my mind to Jim Shooter at the time. Because everyone was giving me a free hand at this time. Basically it would be, "OK, what's going on?" I draw [that] and then what's added by whatever writer is the dynamics of wonderful words and description.

Again, I hate to sound like I'm short-changing Dave, but it's not quite clear in my head now, the distinction between that era and Jim Shooter's era. Except for, probably, the Wonder Man/Beast [storyline], and I'm not even sure who did that one.

CBM: Well, let's talk a little bit about your return to *The Avengers* for the recent relaunch of the series, with Kurt Busiek, and the forthcoming cross-over with *JLA*. Did you have any misgivings about returning to the book after that big break away from it?

Perez: Actually, I was talking to Ralph Macchio—Ralph and I were originally working together because I was going to be doing a two part graphic novel with The Avengers, as the writer working with another artist, but then that got shelved after writing the first plot and Marvel decided to use the Heroes Reborn concept, which made all further Avengers projects moot. And, when the halfway mark came in on the Heroes Reborn and Marvel knew that they

AVENGERS V1 #172
Another character spotlight, this one on Hawkeye. Another Perez-Austin work.

weren't going to renew the concept, particularly on The Avengers where, of course, it was very problematic due to scheduling, and disagreements with creators, and the dropping out of Rob Liefeld at that point. But it was just, financially, too expensive to keep running the way it was. So they were going to go back.

At that point, I realized that my career was in a bit of a doldrums. I had made a comeback to respectability—or reliability—to the industry with the inking on *The Titans* book over Dan Jurgens, because with the failures of the schedule of *The War of the Gods*, my not finishing *Infinity Gauntlet*, the Titans graphic novel that never saw print, or completion, all these things had made me unreliable to publishers, so I wasn't going to be getting offers of the big time projects anymore. From my own doing. I don't blame them at all.

And, when Ralph and I spoke, I was getting good buzz on *The Titans*. I had helped salvage some of my reputation because, thanks to Dan Jurgens and Eddie Berganza championing my doing the book—which DC was reluctant to have me do—I had at least showed I could stay on a book for a year and produce good work on schedule. But there were a lot of people who saw my inking on Dan Jurgens, and I think part of it was marred by the fact that the book was not successful, who had no idea that I had ever penciled. I realized that there was a whole generation out there who don't know who the hell I am. So when Ralph thought that maybe I should consider the idea of—and he thought I would not say yes to it—of maybe writing and drawing the new Avengers after the Heroes Reborn [run], and I realized, "You know, the time is right." I was Gregory Peck in *The Gunfighter*. "There's going to be all these young bucks out there thinking they're faster than me, and I have to prove I can still outdraw them," in both terms of the word, I guess. And, much to Ralph's glee, I said yes to the drawing.

I had not read the book in well over a decade and a half. There was no way I could write *The Avengers*. I had no knowledge that would make me a good writer without tons and tons of research, and, truth to tell, one of the things I find now in my later years in the industry—I'm only 47—is that the writers, they take the hell of editorial decisions, of politics, much more than the artists do. You know, art is art. If they hire you, they know that you can draw, you usually like what you do. That's it. [But] ideas are such a fragile thing, and people have to fight to keep them intact. So, the idea of writing *The Avengers* is something I never even remotely considered.

I suggested that he talk to either Mark Waid or Kurt Busiek, both of whom I've been interested in working with because I trusted their knowledge of history, and to be able to make history seem new, because of the new spins they would put on it. And I would gladly work with them without even co-plotting. I didn't even want to do that. I said, "I have now been away too long." So, when I came in, it was strictly to provide the best visuals I could knowing, and suspecting—and some dealers expressed this—that there was going to be a feeling of concern and ambivalence about my doing the book because I was not of the Image school, or the style that was currently hot at the time. The reason Heroes Reborn was very successful was because [they were done in] the style of the era, even though it probably cost Marvel [so much] more money to produce those books, that it wasn't as profitable for them as they would have liked. Although it was profitable for the dealers, but of course, the book's gonna cost the same, no matter what, for them. So there were some who actually were not all that enthused, or optimistic, about my return to *The Avengers*.

But that's exactly what I needed. I needed something that would make me be the best artist I can be, and I would try my hardest. I left *The Titans* years back because of schedules. I couldn't maintain a monthly book without doing looser penciling, and I had to compromise, make things a little easier for myself, in order to get the book finished. And still the book was selling, which was very gratifying, but then I realized I would never become a better artist if I don't have to.

With *The Avengers*, I had to. Just like with *Wonder Woman*, I had to. And, originally, *Titans*; the book was not going to succeed unless everyone there gave it their best effort.

When I went in I had to prove both that I could sell the book—not only to the nostagists, but to the new fans—and that I could stay on the book. The odds were against me remaining on the book six issues straight. The fact that I stayed on 15 issues, and two double-sized issues in the course of those 15 [proved I could do it]. Mark Waid—who said he also lost money on that wager—but Mark Waid called mine one of comic's few John Travolta careers. Wherein I am now, thankfully, a hot commodity again after going through a very, very high profile period of heat during the times that I was doing *The Titans*, and *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, and even at the dawn of *Wonder Woman*. That, though at one time my name had incredible marquee value, I allowed that to slip by. And I don't blame [it only on] tastes changing and everything else; I also blame that on the fact that I was not making wise decisions, and I was not acting professionally, and not putting out books in a timely fashion, not making myself valuable to the industry as a whole.

So now, I appreciate in my forties something that I did not appreciate as much in my twenties and early thirties; how much I love to draw comics, and how much the success of the industry is going to be dependent on the creators' own excitement about the industry. If we cannot show

that we love comics, we'll do anything to produce good comics, why should we be surprised that the fans themselves cannot muster enthusiasm, stay loyal and buy the product. You've got to prove that you're worth the fans' bucks. I want to make sure that I'm worth the fans' bucks.

And *Avengers* is a success I do not take lightly. It got me everything—the offer of *JLA/Avengers*, the work at CrossGen—all these things that have come, are coming because of the fact that I proved I can still sell the goods, and that I will work hard to do it. There are a lot of fans of my current *Avengers* work who were not even alive when I did my first *Avengers* work. And to them I am the new kid on the block. All they're seeing is the artwork. The fact that there's a balding, white bearded old man actually drawing this book means nothing to them, as long as they're excited about the next page. And that is incredibly gratifying.

CBM: How were you and Kurt working together on that run?

Perez: Kurt provided a very detailed plot, usually page by page. He made suggestions of certain actions, knowing full well I might change that, anyway. But, again, it's the standard Marvel Style—for lack of a better term—plot. The only difference between a Kurt Busiek plot and other people's plots that I've had, I have seldom seen a plot that requires almost like a bibliography, because he has so many references that have to be culled. [General laughter] I get a plot, which may be about 10, 12 pages long, and then I get a reference package that may be 34 pages of Xeroxes from comics that he's referring to. Because, again, his sense of history is such that it's all reference, so I'm constantly going through tons of reference going through a Kurt Busiek plot, as opposed to The Titans where, for the most part, we were creating the whole concept of Titans. And, because we were creating a universe, there wasn't as much to refer to. On occasion we would use alien races, or [something similar].

So, in the case of *Titans*, reference was minimal. If it was an important event, we found it. But *Avengers* is brimming with history, because Kurt wants to make sure that there's a sense of a world that everyone is living in. And, because Heroes Reborn had its own separate universe, you have to basically decide, "OK, what exists and what doesn't exist?" and acknowledging that the Avengers had been gone for a while. All these little things that you have to work in.

AVENGERS V3 #4
The Avengers returned to prominence starting in 1998—both in stories and in sales—during Perez's run on Volume 3.

The one thing that I had to also impress upon Kurt, which I had a better experience with Marv, is that there are times he's writing something in the plot [and I'll think,] "This scene seems a little mundane," or I expected something a little more lively, whatever. But I draw it, [and] add a little more jazz to it. Then it comes to dialogue. "Holy crap! That's not what I expected at all. That's great!" He surprised me. [General laughter] The little things that the characters say will set the story going, but there's no way he's going to tell even me, sometimes, what he plans on always doing. Sometimes it is a little extra surprise. He keeps me in the loop, but sometimes I think he deliberately tells me [less, or] "on a need to know" basis....Or just the subtle wording changes something that could have been mundane into [a scene that's] actually enticing, and thought-provoking, and setting up something for the future that, without the combination of facial expressions, body language and dialogue doesn't exist. So, again, it's that great symbiotic relationship that I have shared with Marv, I share with Kurt.

When people comment on *The Avengers*, they don't comment as much about the dialogue, they don't comment about the artwork, they comment about the story, about the characters and how they're all acting in it. And, despite my ego initially being bruised, "Why aren't they talking about my artwork more?" I realized that's exactly what we should be doing. It's successful! We're creating a successful book wherein Kurt and I are fused. That, beyond knowing that Kurt doesn't draw a single line, as far as the storyline it's hard to tell where one begins the other one ends.

But I give credit where credit's due. I'm happy and proud of what I've done on *The Avengers*. But if Kurt didn't provide thought-provoking stories, I don't think this book would have been anywhere near as successful. The fact that the book is still successful after my departure is a credit to Kurt Busiek.

CBM: Well, it's not like you've completely ended your involvement with those characters since your move to join CrossGen.

Perez: I love working at CrossGen. Strangely enough, despite the fact that I'm working a staff job, there's the most creative feeling of fulfillment there. They knew, full well, that if I was offered *JLA/Avengers*—and that did not really seem likely; that carrot's been held out in front of me for well over a decade—that I would not accept, or could not accept, their offer. I think the company has marvelous ideas. I see Mark Alessi as a visionary in many ways. But I couldn't give up working on *JLA/Avengers*. Maybe it's a selfish thing, but I couldn't give up *JLA/Avengers*.

When I had to make the decision, when *JLA/Avengers* was actually offered, and it was on paper, but I had to make a decision saying, "Well, then I can't accept CrossGen's deal," regardless that my wife and I love what CrossGen has to offer, that they found a way for me to get both. By becoming a staff member of CrossGen, getting to work on these fantasy stories which I'm having a grand time doing, and, in order to accommodate *JLA/Avengers*, taking a leave of absence so that I can actually work on the book I've waited nearly two decades to do, and then with that very fitting battle victory assignment [behind me], be able to get away from super-heroes for a while, if not forever.

By doing that book, I'll have done everything I can do. There's not much more I can do with super-heroes that will not be a repeat of everything I've done in the past. And, after over a quarter century, I needed to do something different. And [because] I've thought this before—[such as] when I did a book at Malibu, which was basically just super-heroes techno, same thing—of doing things elsewhere, and thinking, "OK, I want to do something different," and then not being satisfied, that I waited until I got through my first issue of *CrossGen Chronicles* before I would make a decision. And I genuinely enjoyed it.

And watching everyone's reaction to a different side of George Perez was something that, you know, I need that, artistically, again. Another stage of drawing. [At CrossGen,] I'm being offered fantasy, science fiction, I'm hoping someday maybe to get into horror book. I've not touched a horror book, yet. I'm getting to do other things. And, by doing the JLA/Avengers [cross-over] for the next year and a half or so, I'm getting the best of all worlds. I'm getting to do both types of stories; stories that made my career, and the types of stories that, hopefully, will make my future career.

I don't think the industry would have been served by me having to make the decision one way or another. If I took on *JLA/Avengers* at the cost of [working with] CrossGen, I probably would have looked at my future with a little less excitement, because what's there to do in Marvel or DC once I finish *JLA/Avengers*? There wasn't much more I could do there. But if I took CrossGen, I would have missed *JLA/Avengers*, and I really needed that to provide closure. So I'm getting the best of all worlds.

So I'm doing the best work of my career, hopefully...on CrossGen, and I have to be doing my best super-hero work of my career on *JLA/Avengers*, because people are expecting a hell of a lot of me now on that book. They've waited a long time, too. Some of them, "Hey, I didn't know I was waiting. I wasn't even born!" And my goal is, this has to be the one that they remember me by, because it might be the last taste they get for a very, very long time. Because it's time for me to expand into a new field of endeavor, and the way CrossGen is going, I see that I'm probably going to be [there] a very long time... They are succeeding better than

most people thought, probably including themselves, so I'm happy there. And by doing *JLA/Avengers*, I got nothin' to complain about. What a great career!

CBM: You're not just having your cake, and eating it, too, but you're even taking it home! [General laughter]

Perez: Yes, exactly. I think people would have resented my not doing it. Because, another satisfying thing about *JLA/Avengers*, it was my project. If I had said no to it, the project was dead. Because DC and Marvel were cutting back on their cross-overs, and had no reason to do it unless it had that historical significance. Not only historical because of my doing it, because it was due me, but the fact that I managed to rekindle my career [enough] that would be fans interested in it. If this was a few years ago when my career was [waning], I can't see them benefiting from it because I would not have had the success of *The Avengers* to rekindle the excitement of my doing the book. So I take pride in the fact that I worked to get the offer. I wanted to make sure that if *JLA/Avengers* was offered to me, it was because I will provide a positive aspect to their promoting it, other than just satisfying the need of middle age artist who got rooked nearly two decades ago. There's no sense of a feeling of, "Let's just set things right," as opposed to, "OK, we'll set things right...but we'll also make some big bucks on it!" [General laughter] So I'm hoping they'll be very pleased with the turn out.

CBM: What do you think is going to be the main difference between what you would have done then, and what you'll be doing now on the JLA/Avengers project, and do you think it'll be better serviced by coming out now?

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Building a Better Cross

Dan Raspler on George Perez and the JLA/Avengers Cross-over

AVENGERS V3 #1
Crowd scenes, particularly crowd scenes with lots of super-heroes, are a Perez specialty.

-Over, Part Two

by Bill Baker

Comic Book Marketplace: Dan, what makes George Perez the artist for *JLA/Avengers*?

Dan Raspler: Well, it's difficult to imagine this particular project without George. He was born to do this project, eventually, I'd say. He's been associated with some of the greatest stories of *both* the *Justice League* and *The Avengers* over the years, and there's no one who's *better* at choreographing the level of energy and action and millions of characters than George Perez. And I think everybody in the industry realizes that, and that's one of the reasons this is such a highly anticipated project. In fact, the phone is constantly ringing from people wanting updates, and it's been very difficult for Tom Brevoort, the *Avengers* editor, and I to keep our traps shut, because we're so proud of what George and Kurt [Busiek, the writer of the project] have been doing. It's taken a lot of time and energy to really compose what we think is the perfect balance of character, conflict and exciting adventure story with the proper villains and all the rest of it. So, knowing that it's ultimately in the hands of George Perez is a real source of comfort and excitement for everyone.

CBM: Do you think that the final product will live up to everyone's expectations? After all, there's about 20 years of speculation and excitement behind this project.

Raspler: Oh yeah! It's gonna *exceed* expectations. I think people expect a really fun team-on-team fight scene, in the Mighty Marvel manner, and some sort of bigger-than-life, imaginative problem-solving from the DC side, but I think it's really an amazing fusion and a sort of tribute to both universes. It is, in a way, more than just the *Justice League* and more than just *The Avengers*, although it's not like a big inter-company cross-over; not every character from both universes is going to appear, or anything like that. But it is going to be a kind of cross-sectional view of both entire universes. It's gonna be fun.

I sometimes feel that we're a jaded, overexposed reading public, and no one is ever entirely happy with everything—we feel we've read it all before. But I think that this is something where people are going to really get what they hoped for.

CBM: Any last thoughts?

Raspler: Yeah, I wish I could talk to people about all the really cool stuff we've already come up with. But I can't, because this sort of thing has such lead-time it gets crazy.

*[A Group Editor, Dan Raspler is one of the primary forces working behind the scenes to guide and shape the present day DC Universe. He's also the editor of one of DC's flagship titles—*JLA*—as well as a co-editor, with Tom Brevoort of Marvel Comics, of the long awaited and highly-anticipated JLA/Avengers cross-over.]*

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CBM: Did you have any misgivings about having him come back on *The Avengers*.

Brevoort: Other people did. [Laughter] I didn't so much. And, when I say "other people," it's as much, or more, the fan community as anything. The comment we heard a lot at the time was, "Yeah, great, George is gonna do *Avengers*. Who's gonna draw issue 3?" because George had developed a reputation for bouncing around from project to project, and not sticking to one thing for very long. And I think that that reputation, in a real way, helped galvanize George into saying, "Nope. I'm gonna prove 'em wrong. I'm gonna show them they're wrong!" And George did the first 15 issues of *Avengers* without a break, two of which were double size, and was on the book for three years. So, certainly, he put all those naysayers to shame, and they kind of sunk over the horizon when he'd been around for a little while.

But, as far as misgivings, I didn't really have 'em. I knew that George, from talking to him, was jazzed to be doing it, saw it as a tremendous opportunity, and felt very gratified he that was given the responsibility to do *The Avengers* when it was coming back from "Heroes Reborn," re-establishing it in the Marvel Universe and making it a premiere title once again. So I was just excited to be working with him. I didn't have any misgivings about it, and I figured as long as it lasted, that as long as we could have a good time, and have fun, it would be a worthwhile ride.

CBM: You say that George is the greatest living super-hero artist; what aspects of his work make him that in your opinion?

Brevoort: It's a number of things. George's work has a synthesis of the strengths of so many of the great comic book artist of the past. He's got the power and the energy of Kirby. He's got the subtlety of a Curt Swan. He's got the quirkiness of Steve Ditko. He sort of runs the gamut. He's the kind of guy that can do anything. In the course of a 22-page story, if you have a sequence that's just two characters sitting around a kitchen table, talking, he can give that scene life. He'll certainly convince you about the environment. He'll put the research in, and give you a kitchen that looks like a real kitchen that real people live in, with appropriate items scattered around. The characters themselves will have distinctive faces, he doesn't use a stock face over and over again, and distinctive body language. And his pacing of the story is excellent.

George, first and foremost, is a storyteller. He's concerned with conveying the story visually, as opposed to doing a lot of either pretty pictures that don't really add up to anything, or focusing on the money shot over the content of the story that he is illustrating. Make no mistake about it: If it's time for a money shot, a big shot of Thor pounding the hell out of something, George can do that as well. He's just got tremendous range, and over the course of his career, he's been all over the map in terms of subject matter, and whatnot. But there is something about George doing classic, straight ahead hero comics that are at once very, very traditionally based in their style, and yet are kinetic and explosive and modern.

And he pours more effort, more energy onto the page than anybody else. And, particularly for a guy who's been doing this for a good long time, he really has a work ethic that says, "Every page that I do, I have to be better than my last page. I have to constantly keep striving to re-establish myself, and reinvent myself, and keep myself at the forefront of the business," because there are plenty of artists who had a day in the sun, and then just kind of became either reliable workhorses, or who were eclipsed by other guys. And George, clearly, on every page he does, he's giving it his all. So, if there are other guys that eclipse him, it's not gonna be by default; they're gonna have to work for it.

When George was jumping around from company to company, I would buy any book that he worked on. Because, even if the characters seemed kinda weak, and the story seemed kinda lame, I knew there was gonna be enough there visually to keep me entertained. George made a lot of mediocre comics palatable, and even exciting, just by his execution of them. And when he was working with good material, he was top of the charts.

CBM: Well, while George may have left the monthly title, and the halls of DC and Marvel for CrossGen, we've still got one last major project featuring the characters that helped make his reputation to look forward to, kind of like his last hurrah, namely the long-awaited *Avengers/JLA* cross-over.

Brevoort: I don't tend to see it as a "last hurrah." I think George looks at it as, "This is going to be my last mainstream super-hero comic event [because] I'm going to be doing CrossGen work, or other work, for the rest of my days." But, my suspicion would be, sooner or later, he'll be back to do other stuff. That being said, he is certainly pulling all the stops out on *Avengers/JLA* to make it the best book of his career, and really a milestone to go out on.

But, for myself, I retain a skepticism. I have heard these sort of stories too many times in the past, people saying, "I'm never gonna work for Marvel again," or "I'm never gonna work for DC again," or I'm never gonna do whatever again. And anything's possible. Tomorrow's another day. Anything could happen. Things could change. But it's great that we've finally got this project together, and he'll have a chance to really kind of go out in a blaze of glory, an apoc-

alyptic Ragnarok—but in a good way—to his super-hero career. But I remain skeptical. I think he'll do more stuff, eventually. [Laughter]

CBM: Well, let me ask you, less as an editor and more as the fanboy that I suspect you truly are deep in your heart: Is the story we're going to get, the whole package, what we're going to finally get on this project, worth the wait?

Brevoort: Let me answer that as much as an editor as a fanboy: I think you're gonna get a terrific, terrific story. That said, one of my worries all along has been, "Is there any story imaginable that is gonna live up to expectations of people who've been waiting for this for 20 years?" We're gonna go out and try to fulfill everybody's expectations, and try and take people by surprise, and have some interactions, have some events, that nobody has thought of, and nobody will see coming. So hopefully it will surprise and delight people.

"Will it be worth the wait?" Yes. But, like a Beatles reunion, it almost can't be as good as it is in your mind. That being said, we're going to get as close as we humanly, possibly can. And it's gonna be a hell of a comic book. Four comic books, actually.

CBM: What do you think that this project is going to offering, not just new readers, but those who might not have even looked at a newer comic for quite a while?

Brevoort: I think, in it's own way, it's similar to what something like *Crisis* [*on Infinite Earths*] offered to a non-immersed audience. Which is a massive story, with a lot of colorful characters in a myriad of exotic locations doing spectacular, heroic things in a grand, sweeping adventure that goes all over the known Multiverse, playing with characters that are icons, and also characters that are lesser lights. If we do our jobs right, this is the ultimate inter-company cross-over; once we're done with this, nobody's gonna have a reason to do another one, because there's just not gonna be any [point] to it. So it's big, a lot of spectacle, with characters that everybody has at least a passing familiarity with, at least the biggest of the number, and just that sort of electric excitement that you get with the best super-hero comics, charged to the nth degree.

This is going to be a big, enormous thing, with a lot of heart.

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Perez: Well, I think I'm a better artist [today] than I was 20 years ago.

The only down side to it—and also the challenge—is that, when I was doing it the first time it was only the fourth of all the cross-over books that had ever been done by Marvel or DC. It was unique. It wasn't a commonplace affair. Well, that has since changed. Marvel and DC have done multiple cross-overs, including cross-overs where all their characters, members of JLA and Avengers, have met. The uniqueness is gone. Which is why I'm actually surprised that they OK'd the project. I didn't see any reason to [do] it.

But I think it provides a greater challenge that could be artistically satisfying. I'm sure it'll be artistically satisfying, hopefully it'll be that way for the fans. Because of the faith in the project now, probably because of the sense of history, we get to do a much bigger story, on a much broader canvas, than we did before. I think the first [version 20 years ago] was only going to be 64 pages long...I forget if it was 48 or 64. Which was an OK story and, with respect to Gerry Conway, I think Gerry treated it more as just another job. Kurt understands how special this book is, and Kurt is doing everything to make this the most successful cross-over within his power to create. And, of course, there's the expectations of what kind of story the fans want.

I think, the first time, just having the JLA and the Avengers together, made it successful enough of an idea. Now, we have to make sure that the story and the art are more than just what you would get in a comic book, [that they're] the best the both of us can do, because now it has been done before; we just have to do it better.

George Perez

Next Month: Teen Titans, Crisis and more

THE COMING OF...

BRONZE!

WHICH WAS THE FIRST ISSUE!?

ALL-NEW! THE SILVER-AGE SMASHING

ORIGINS

WE DARE YOU TO READ! A WORLD REBORN!

THE BEGINNING OF THE BIRTH!

The Birth of the Bronze Age

The Comic Book Renaissance of the 1970s

by John R. Stuart

*[*CBM *unearthed this unpublished 1997 item, Stuart's examination of the question being both timely and prescient.]*

Most of the great comic book collections began in the 1970s; astute collectors began to realize that the great comic books of the 1930s, '40s, '50s and '60s were treasures that cried out to be preserved. Thus began the boom days of comic book collecting. During the 1970s, these collectors largely ignored the then current books. Therefore, most books printed in the 1970s (except for the clearly established leaders such as *Batman*, *Superman*, *Spider-Man*, *The Fantastic Four*, etc.) ended up in the discount bins.

There the Bronze Age books languished for over 25 years, suffering the wear and tear of thousands of fingers. This abuse, combined with some of the lowest print runs in the history of the business, has elevated some into the realm of obscurity.

But that didn't mean the industry ceased to flourish creatively. The Bronze Age featured some of the finest artists and writers who ever worked in the four-color business.

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Beginning the Bronze Age of Comics

by Dave Blanchard

[Prepared for publication in CBM *in mid-2000, Blanchard's article had to await* CBM*'s re-organization to see print.]*

Although some have yet to officially endorse the term, the "Bronze Age" has come through common usage to mean the period of time immediately following the Silver Age, and lasting roughly 10 years, i.e., 1971-80. In other words, the Bronze Age is basically a prettied-up moniker applied to the comic books that were published in the 1970s. The question that nobody seems to ask very often, if at all, is: Why should '70s comics be accorded the status of an "Age" in the first place?

We're now sufficiently far enough away from the 1970s to have a clearer picture of what trends developed and had a significant impact on the industry that followed; this is, after all, the standard way that "Ages" are determined. Rather than simply accept the premise—largely promoted by profit-motivated dealers and collectors—that every comic published in the '70s was an undiscovered treasure (Marvel's *Night Nurse* is probably the poster

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The birth of the two previous comic book ages have been clearly established. The Golden Age commenced with *Action Comics* #1 in June 1938, featuring the first appearance of Superman and lasted at least until the Second World War in 1945. September 1956 the Silver Age was born when DC published *Showcase* #4, starring The Flash. This second great Age lasted until 1969. (While some might argue, the vast majority of collectors and dealers view these two titles as the founding books of these Ages.)

What book defines the birth of the Bronze Age? A case for several possibilities could be made, but first it's necessary to examine what makes *Action Comics* #1 and *Showcase* #4 the catalysts for their Ages.

Action #1 was responsible for the creation of the entire super-hero genre that filled the 1930s and '40s. Without this comic book the business might never have grown into the major industry we know today. Superman is directly responsible for the creation of virtually every super-hero, his impact spurred the growth of the comic book industry and *Action* #1 is the most valuable and highly sought-after book in collecting.

Showcase #4 is similar in many respects. This book re-introduced The Flash. Not The Flash of the Golden Age, but a new and revitalized Flash. The popularity of the new Flash sent out the message that super-heroes were back and back for good, the message that super-heroes meant money.

Therefore it can be simply stated that both *Action* #1 and *Showcase* #4 had IMPACT, they changed the way the comic book business was operated, they led to the creation and/or revitalization of old characters, they set trends that cascaded throughout the business, they were imitated by the competition. They had tremendous IMPACT.

As the Silver Age is defined as ending in 1969, our candidate will have appeared post-1969. The nine best candidates that come immediately to mind, and the arguments for and against, are listed below:

STAR SPANGLED WAR #151, 6/70 DC
1st Unknown Soldier
DETECTIVE COMICS #400, 6/70 DC
1st Man-Bat
ASTONISHING TALES #1, 8/70 Marvel
revival Ka-Zar (with Dr. Doom)
AMAZING ADVENTURES #1, 8/70 Marvel
Inhumans solo book
CONAN THE BARBARIAN #1, 10/70 Marvel
1st Conan in comics
NEW GODS #1, 3/71 DC 1st Orion
HOUSE OF SECRETS #92, 6/71 DC
1st Swamp Thing
AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #101, 10/71 Marvel
1st Morbius
WEIRD WAR TALES #1, 10/71 DC
Horror Anthology

• **STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES #151** introduced the very popular new character The Unknown Soldier, and he appeared in the next seven issues. *Star Spangled War Stories* became *Unknown Soldier* at issue 205 and ran until December 1982. (The Unknown Soldier appeared again in a four-issue series by Vertigo in 1997.) Definitely a great character, but aside from the title change it had no impact on the industry and did not revive the slowly stagnating war comic genre.

• **DETECTIVE COMICS** #400 featured the great art of Neal Adams and premiered the Man-Bat and the first Batgirl/Robin team up. Man-Bat went on to appear in numerous Batman books and had two brief titles of his own. Again, an early 1970s title that didn't change the industry or spawn any imitations.

• **ASTONISHING TALES** #1 can't be discussed without also mentioning **Ka-Zar** #1; both appeared at the same time. *Ka-Zar* contained reprints of earlier stories and *Astonishing Tales* also featured Dr. Doom. Both titles can be compared to *Showcase* #4 as they attempted to re-introduce a classic Golden Age figure. While these books sold well and *Ka-Zar* lasted for twenty issues and appeared in cross-overs throughout the Marvel universe it had no dramatic affect on the industry.

• **AMAZING ADVENTURES** #1 took the Inhumans from *The Fantastic Four* and featured them in their own title. An interesting group of mysterious heroes, they lasted for ten issues and then later appeared in a short-lived series in 1976. *Amazing Adventures* greatest contribution is issue #11 which introduced the new Beast of the X-Men. While an interesting title it does not have sufficient impact to warrant further consideration.

• **CONAN THE BARBARIAN** #1 bursts into the comics in November 1970, his first appearance in the four-color medium. The Cimmerian adventurer had been wreaking havoc through the pulps for years, having first appeared in 1936. *Conan the Barbarian* lasted 23 years and 275 issues, and Conan appeared in at least eight additional comic titles and magazines. This title is directly responsible for the development of Kull, Thongor and Red Sonja. DC took notice and added such sword and sorcery titles as, ahem, *Sword of Sorcery* (3/75), *Stalker* and *Claw the Unconquered* (6/75). Gold Key also produced a Conan copycat in their 19-issue run series, *Dagar the Invincible*. Conan's appeal was so great that two movies, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, were produced.

It would therefore appear that this is our first serious contender for the book that began the Bronze Age. Conan was a great success, his titles had staying power (lasting through the Bronze Age and into the Modern Age) and inspired the creation of similar

THE BIRTH OF THE BRONZE AGE by John Stuart

titles at Marvel and their competitors. Here is a book with IMPACT.

• The next title to be considered is DC's marvelous **NEW GODS** #1. This inspired series, penciled, scripted and edited by Jack Kirby, was an ambitious attempt to create a new super-hero universe: the Fourth World. It spilled over into Kirby's companion titles of *Forever People* and *Mister Miracle*. An artistic tour de force, this comic book, while beautiful and well written, did not capture the attention of comic book buyers and never truly fulfilled its potential. DC did later print two additional New Gods titles but *New Gods* had insufficient impact to be called the defining book of its age.

• **HOUSE OF SECRETS** #92 from DC was cover-dated July 1971 and introduced Swamp Thing. This classic book is one of the most expensive and highly sought-after books of the Bronze Age. A story about a good scientist who becomes transformed into a swamp monster, it was a hit with the ecologically concerned readers of the 1970s. Swamp Thing received his own title in 1972 which lasted for 24 issues, and then again reappeared in 1982 for a 171-issue run. *Swamp Thing* also generated a short-lived TV show and two movies. Clearly a contender, *Swamp Thing* was a title which attracted a more philosophical reader and had great impact on the industry. As for inspiring "imitation," Marvel did produce a similar character in Man-Thing. (While this character didn't receive his own title until 1974, Man-Thing actually made his first appearance in *Savage Tales* #1 a month before *House of Secrets* #92.)

• **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN** #101 from Marvel introduced Morbius, The Living Vampire; one of Spider-Man's more interesting villains. I have to admit that I have a certain bias towards this issue (my primary collecting focus is the Amazing Spider-Man), but I don't think issue #101 meets the criteria to qualify as the key book of its age. Yes, it introduced a new and exciting villain, who received his own 32-issue series in 1992, but it did not send ripples throughout the industry. Perhaps the creation of Marvel's *Tomb of Dracula* (#1, Apr 1972) can be attributed to *AS-M* #101, but it could just as easily have been part of the general revival of horror that occurred in the 1970s.

• **WEIRD WAR TALES** #1 arrived on the newsstands in October 1971 and was accompanied by the companion title **Ghosts** #1. Both books have many similarities and lasted until 1983 and 1982, but as *WWT* lasted longer and inspired more imitators it gets the nomination. *Weird War Tales* had an immediate impact on the industry and was the catalyst for such DC titles as *Weird Western Tales*, *Weird Mystery Tales* and *Weird Worlds*. DC's competitors launched *Weird Wonder Tales* (Marvel, 9/72), *Weird Suspense* (Atlas, 2/75) and *Weird Tales of the Macabre*) Atlas mag, 1/75). But *Weird War Tales* also lead to a renaissance in horror books of all types and as a result horror books reigned supreme and had another day of glory during the 1970s. Not since the early 1950s had there ever been so many horror books on the market, no less than 30 horror books were on the newsstand, most inspired by the runaway success of *Weird War Tales*. Please see the list on the next page for the horror books which appeared in the '70s.

Weird War Tales invited imitation and inspired the industry, therefore based upon this evidence **I nominate *Weird War Tales #1* as the first and defining book of the Bronze Age**. A classic title in its own right, featuring beautiful art and superior scripts, *WWT* was the spark that re-ignited the horror genre. *WWT* lasted for an amazing 124 issues and finished up in 1983, the second longest running title of the Bronze Age. *[Author Stuart, contacted in August 2001, points out that broad collector recognition of* WWT *#1 has come about—note the current selling and* Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide *prices, and a copy at auction with a $300 reserve.]*

If you agree with my selection—well, that's great. If not, then by all means state your case and make your argument. Until then, keep searching the quarter bins for those Bronze Age gems, and if you're lucky enough to find a copy of *Weird War Tales* #1 or *Ghosts* #1 be prepared to pay multiples of *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* for it; these may be two of the hardest Bronze Age books to find in any condition.

*[*CBM *notes that the various published prices of copies in FN (which eliminates the baldest speculators) can generate the following comparison of increases in price against original retail (a reasonable ground zero):*

	1987	1995	2000	2001
WWT #1 (25c)	200%	560%	16,000%	24,000%
GS X-M #1 (50c)	7,000%	10,000%	24,400%	39,000%

Clearly, in the last six years, WWT #1 has been attracting collector interest on a scale approaching that enjoyed by GS X-M *#1 beginning many years earlier.]*

John Stuart is a manager with Bell Canada, designing telephone networks in Canada, author of an unpublished alternative-history novel on the Battle of Gettysburg and of short stories.

HORROR BOOKS OF THE 1970s, chart by John Stuart

TITLE	COVER DATE	PUBL.	ISSUES
BEWARE	3/73	MARVEL	9
BLACK MAGIC	10/73	DC	9
CHAMBER OF CHILLS	11/72	MARVEL	25
CRYPT OF SHADOWS	1/73	MARVEL	21
DARK MANSION	10/71	DC	4
DEAD OF NIGHT	12/73	MARVEL	11
DEMON	9/72	DC	16
FORDIDDEN TALES	6/72	DC	10
GHOST MANOR (2nd series)	10/71	CHARLTON	77
GHOSTS	10/71	DC	112
JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY	10/72	MARVEL	19
MARVEL CHILLERS	10/75	MARVEL	7
MONSTER HUNTERS	8/75	CHARLTON	18
MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN	1/73	MARVEL	18
MONSTERS UNLEASHED	7/73	MARVEL	11
SANDMAN	6/74	DC	6
SECRETS OF HAUNTED HOUSE	5/75	DC	46
SECRETS OF SINISTER HOUSE	7/72	DC	13
SINISTER HOUSE OF SECRET LOVE	11/77	DC	4
SUPERNATURAL THRILLERS	12/72	MARVEL	15
TALES OF EVIL	2/75	ATLAS	3
TALES OF GHOST CASTLE	6/75	DC	3
TOMB OF DARKNESS	9/74	MARVEL	17
TOMB OF DRACULA	4/72	MARVEL	70
UNCANNY TALES	12/73	MARVEL	12
VAULT OF EVIL	2/73	MARVEL	23
WEIRD MYSTERY TALES	8/72	DC	24
WEIRD WAR TALES	10/72	DC	124
WEIRD WESTERN TALES	6/72	DC	70
WEIRD WONDER TALES	12/73	MARVEL	22
WEREWOLF BY NIGHT	9/72	MARVEL	43

BEGINNING THE BRONZE AGE OF COMICS by David Blanchard

[continued from page 32]

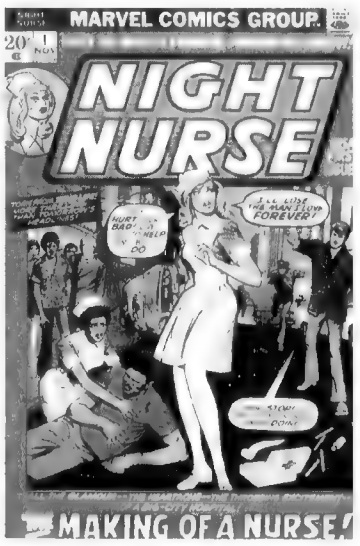
child for this kind of revisionist market manipulation, though there are scores of other examples), we ought to look instead at the precedent of the two metallic-named ages already established to first ascertain if there was a significant enough movement in the '70s worthy of the "Age" designation, and if so, to determine exactly when the Bronze Age began. As we shall see, there was indeed such a defining moment that we can clearly label as the starting point of a new age of super-hero comics.

One of the great fallacies that has unnecessarily confused the issue is the assumption that the Bronze Age immediately followed the Silver Age, which came to an end at the end of 1970, coincident with Jack Kirby's return to DC and Superman editor Mort Weisinger's retirement (among a number of other significant events). However, as history has shown us, comic book "Ages" don't work that way, i.e., one Age doesn't immediately follow on the heels of its predecessor.

First, we should acknowledge that both the Golden and the Silver Ages are super-hero-centric ages, as is immediately apparent by a quick glance at their start dates. The Golden Age began with DC's *Action Comics* #1 (Jun 1938), the first appearance of Superman, the granddaddy of all super-heroes and the veritable linchpin of the entire comics industry. Similarly, the Silver Age began with DC's *Showcase* #4 (Sep-Oct 1956), the first appearance of DC's second-generation Flash.

Now, no one would claim that the Flash single-handedly jump-started the Silver Age or had anywhere near the impact on the industry that Superman did; on the other hand, you can draw a direct line from *Flash* to *Green Lantern* to *Justice League of America* to *The Fantastic Four* and from there on to virtually every other super-hero comic that appeared in the 1960s.

Since the Golden and Silver Ages are largely defined by the super-heroes who dominated their respective periods, it follows then that their endpoints would be similarly characterized by the emergence of other genres that superseded the super-heroes. There's no clearly defined demarcation point for cutting off the Golden Age (other than, perhaps, VJ Day back in 1945), but the two comics that most eloquently connote the passing of the first great age of super-heroes are Timely's (Marvel) *Captain America's Weird Tales* #75 (Feb 1950) and DC's *All-Star Western* #58 (Apr-May 1951),which replaced respectively *Captain America Comics* and *All-Star Comics*.



Don't believe the hype: **Night Nurse** #1 (Nov 1972) is neither a Bronze Age comic book nor an undiscovered treasure.

While there are numerous examples of 1940s anthology titles evicting their headlining super-heroes in favor of various humor types (particularly teen humor and funny animals), these two examples illustrate most poignantly how far the once-mighty Golden Agers had fallen if even the quintessential

[continued on page 55]

The Smith Report

Pulps

The pulp magazine market continues a consistent upward trend both in customer demand and increasing value. Attesting to this is the fact that just a few years ago collectors had only one convention per year to travel to, while now options are starting to multiply with at least five annual shows to choose from.

The first pulp show of the year was held in March. **Windy City Con** attracted dealers from as far away as Washington State and Florida, the show proved to be an instant success with the fans and financially rewarding for the dealers. A second show is in the works for spring 2002.

The annual **Pulp Con** turned 30 years old this year with a great show held at the downtown Dayton Ohio convention center. Attracting a multitude of dealers, the show sold out early and turned in strong attendance figures. Considered the "San Diego" of pulp shows, this veteran show continues to draw a very healthy crowd. I brought a collector friend with me from Seattle. It was his first time at Pulp Con and I was interested in his perspective on the event. His thoughts were insightful. "As a first time Pulp Con attendee, I was struck by how different the atmosphere was from a comic book convention. Less running about on the part of the collectors as they tried to 'snap up' something before anyone else, more a gathering of READERS who just happened to collect pulps. I saw dealers reading pulps as they sat at their tables, dealers directing collectors to other dealers so they could find what they were looking for, and my favorite moment, when a father introduced his pre-teen son to Jim Steranko as "the man who paints The Shadow." Steranko spent five minutes talking to the boy, asking questions, and LISTENING to him, and autographed his Shadow paperback. That kid (and his Dad) will be pulp fans for life."

Another dealer/collector reflected, likening the show to Woodstock 1969: "Peace and Harmony everywhere. A little pushing and bumping for entry position as a race shaped up at show's open. A sprint to your favorite dealer's table was as rough as it got. It was basically a giant festival of love. PULP LOVE. No traffic jams, no lightning, no mud. But PULPS. And LOTS of them."

As was the case last year, the **Spicy** titles continue to do blockbuster sales both at the pulp shows we attended and on Internet sales. Almost any condition on the Spicy's remained strong sellers. Average general issues in GOOD to VERY GOOD command around the $150 to $200+ mark while FINE issues easily turn over for $350 to $500. The H.J. Ward covers continue to show the heaviest demand followed closely by the Parkhurst art covers.

Recorded Sales include: Spicy Adventure #6 (1935) VG $250, #2 (1940) about VG $175; Spicy Detective #5 (1936) in high grade $525; Spicy Mystery in mid grade $350, #7 (1941) about VG $200.

The Shadow continues to lead the pack of hero pulp titles showing strong demand and strong sales, especially in high grade. Of particular interest seems to be the pre-1938 time period, however all issues 1931 to 1949 continue to be consistent sellers. High grade Shadows made a strong showing at Pulp Con. A VERY FINE copy of 3/1/36 "The Voodoo Master" brought $450 as did the 4/15/36 issue. Of particular importance was a copy of The Shadow showing him unmasked on the cover (8/1/37 "The Shadow Unmasks") which brought $700 in FN/VF.

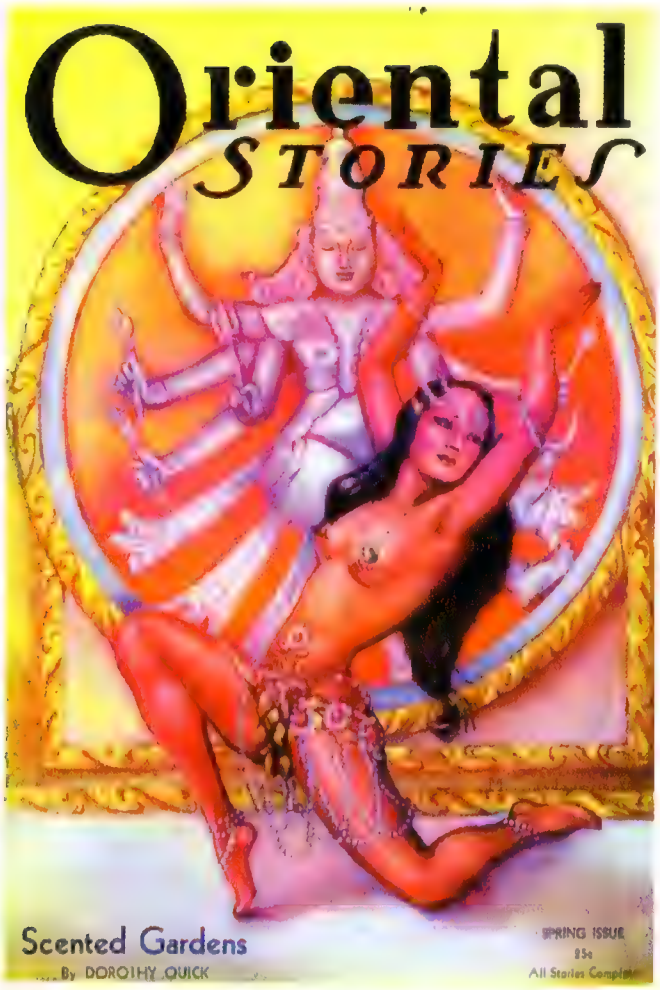
Other recent sales of note: All-Story Cavalier Weekly May 16 1914, containing the very first appearance of "The Beasts of Tarzan" with a very early cover appearance of him, sold for $700; Amazing Stories Aug 1928 containing the very first appearance of Buck Rogers sold for $735 in FN and $100 in about GD with defects. The first and only issue of the Flash Gordon pulp sold for $76; Mystery Tales June 1938 a bondage cover sold for $365. The scarce first issue of Detective Yarns #1 (June 1938) fetched slightly over $400 in VF. This issue contained an early story by L. Ron Hubbard. A low-grade copy of The Spider #1 went for $305 on ebay back in May. Fire Fighters #1 (March 1929) in NF condition sold for $1,500 and a copy of Blue Steel #1 (March 1932) in similar condition went for $1,000. A complete set of the scarce Clayton issues of Jungle sold for $1,500 in mid to high grade.

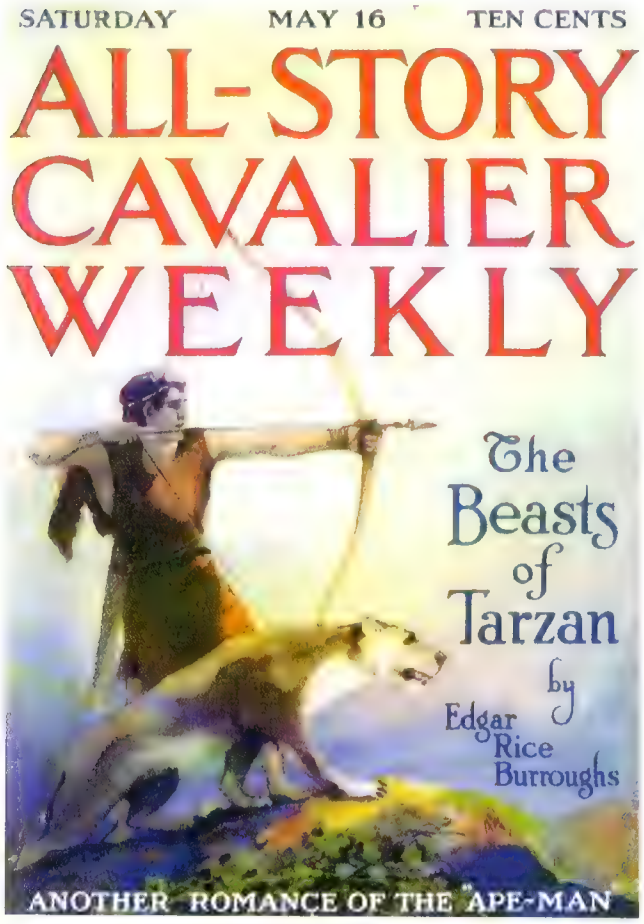
More **sales of note**: Mysterious Wu Fang 9/35 (#1) VG $300; Doc Savage 6/34 FN $255; Spider 1/43 FN $150, 4/41 VG $100; Avenger 12/39 (#3) VG $75, 7/40 (icepick cover) FN $95; a complete run of the ever-elusive Oriental Stories/Magic Carpet sold for $4,500 in an average VG to FN condition; and the Yakima copy of an issue of Thrilling Mystery changed hands for $350 in NM with white paper.

Pulps continue to show steady growth across the board in almost all genres. As demand for attaining especially hard-to-get pulps continues, pricing also reflects this mood, especially in the higher grades. This is affecting the **pricing spread**. What seems to be a valid assessment of the spread based on the current market would be a one to four ratio in GD to FN grades. In other words, if a particular pulp were worth $10 in GD, the same pulp would chart for $20 in VG and $40 in FN condition. Above FN seems to be whatever the market will bear with a higher spread for high-grade pulps with extra nice page quality. Where the high end will land is open to speculation at this point.

David W. Smith, Fantasy Illustrated
POB 13443, Mill Creek, WA 98082
415-745-0229 rockets@speakeasy.net

COLOR GALLERY





Chronicle Books, 150+ pages, $19.95

review by Russ Cochran

In 1936, twenty-two year old Jack Cole moved from his hometown of New Castle, Pennsylvania to Greenwich Village to seek his fortune as a cartoonist.

In 1958, he told his wife he was going out for the mail and the papers. Instead he drove to a sporting goods store where he bought a single-shot .22 rifle. He parked his Chevy station wagon on a gravel road a few miles from his house and shot himself in the head.

Cole started his 22-year span in the comics at Harry "A" Chesler's comic book sweatshop, located at Fifth Avenue and Twenty-ninth Street. Soon after creating the villainous "The Claw" for *Silver Streak Comics*, he moved to Quality Comics where he was heavily and positively influenced by Will Eisner. For *Police Comics* #1 (August 1941) he created his best-known cast of characters with the debut of Plastic Man. In 1947 Cole edited and packaged *True Crime Comics* which featured, in its first issue, the notorious story "Murder, Morphine, and Me," containing the infamous panel of Mary (the addict who tells the story) about to be stabbed in the eye with a hypodermic needle. Dr. Wertham liked to use that panel to illustrate the depravity of comic books.

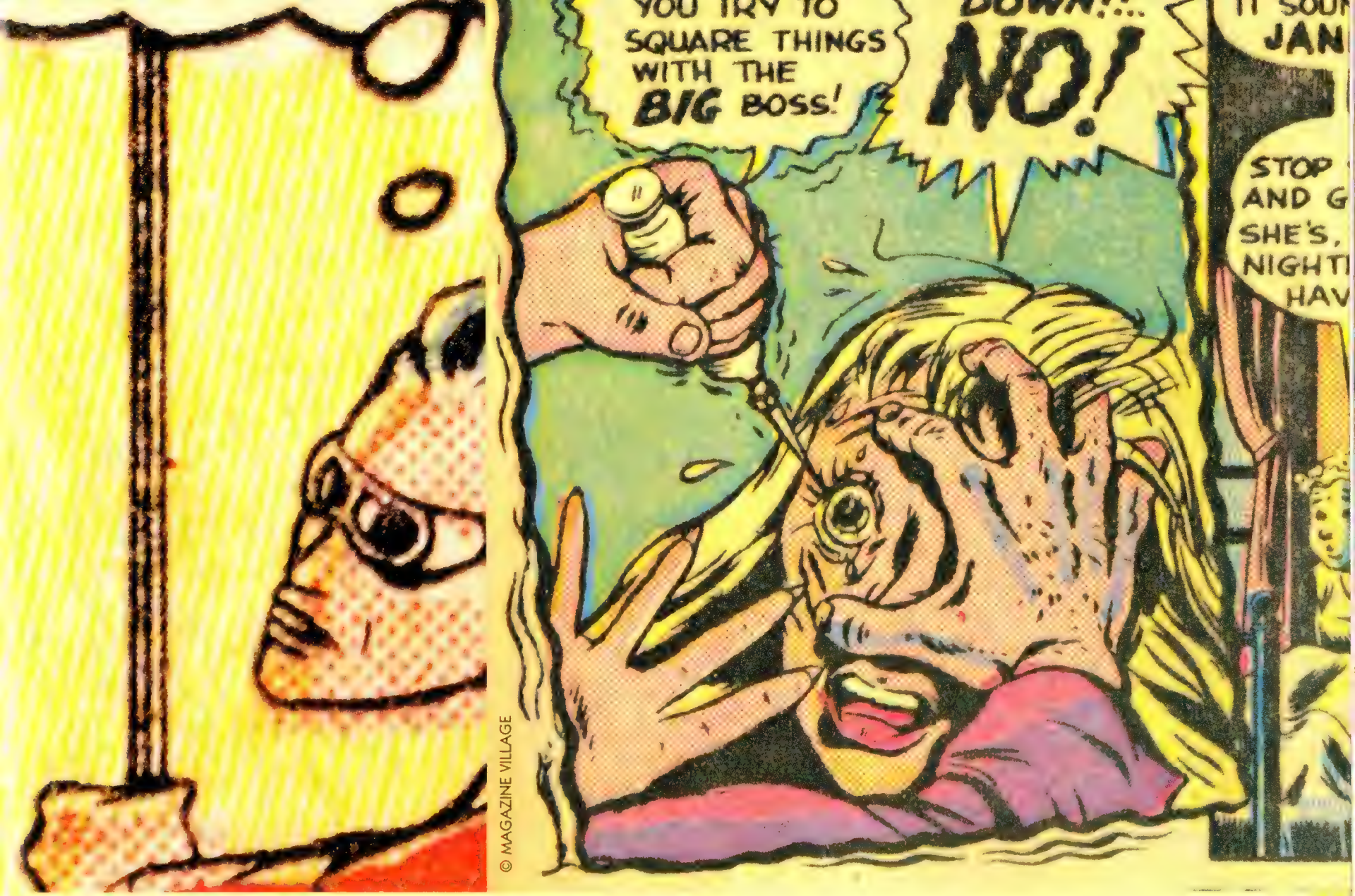
In 1955, Cole and his wife moved to Illinois to become a part of the *Playboy* empire. Jack's rich watercolor cartoons became a staple of the magazine in its formative years from 1955 to 1958, the year of Cole's untimely death.

Cole was a genius that was part Will Eisner, part Harvey Kurtzman, and we can only imagine what Cole could have done if he had been brought into the *MAD* stable early-on. I think he and Kurtzman could have sparked off each other and done some wonderful comic book work.

The text for this book first appeared in a major article by Art Spiegelman for *The New Yorker* magazine in 1999 and is peppered with such spiegelmanisms as (speaking of Plastic Man's sidekick, Woozy Winks):

[continued on page 53]

PLASTIC MAN ART © DC COMICS



review by Paul Gravett

Jack Cole's suicide is one of the unsolved tragedies of American comics, so perhaps rather morbidly I was particularly interested in whether this new biography would shed any light on why on earth he killed himself. What could have driven Cole, aged 43, in the prime of his cartooning career, celebrated for his sophisticated gag cartoons in *Playboy* and picking up more and more papers for his own newspaper strip *Betsy and Me*, to drive off one August afternoon in his Chevy station wagon, buy a rifle, and shoot himself in the head? A handful of theories have been circulating ever since, from drug addiction to money trouble, but to my mind, Art Spiegelman has come as close as anyone in understanding what might have made Cole take his own life, by investigating his comics and cartoons, as much as his life, for clues.

The whole business might be clarified instantly, if anyone ever comes forward someday with the suicide note which Jack mailed to his wife Dorothy on the day he died, Wednesday, August 13, 1958, in which he reportedly explained everything. But at the time, the coroner deemed the letter too personal and did not enter it as evidence at the inquest. By way of explanation, all that Dorothy Cole stated was "We had had an argument before." She has long since remarried and disappeared—who knows if she is still alive, or if the note still exists?

Cole's other suicide letter, mailed to Hugh Hefner, *Playboy* publisher and his editor and father figure, is reproduced here for the first time, but it is not that revealing. Written in capitals to "Dear Hef," it begins, "When you read this I shall be dead. I cannot go on living with myself and hurting those dear to me. What I do has nothing to do with you." Cole mentions owing Hef money, but does not seem unduly troubled, as his estate would cover this. Nor was the *Playboy* lifestyle a direct factor—he apparently never partook of the bunny girls, preferring to work from home. Still, he did spend his last

[continued on page 54]

COLOR GALLERY

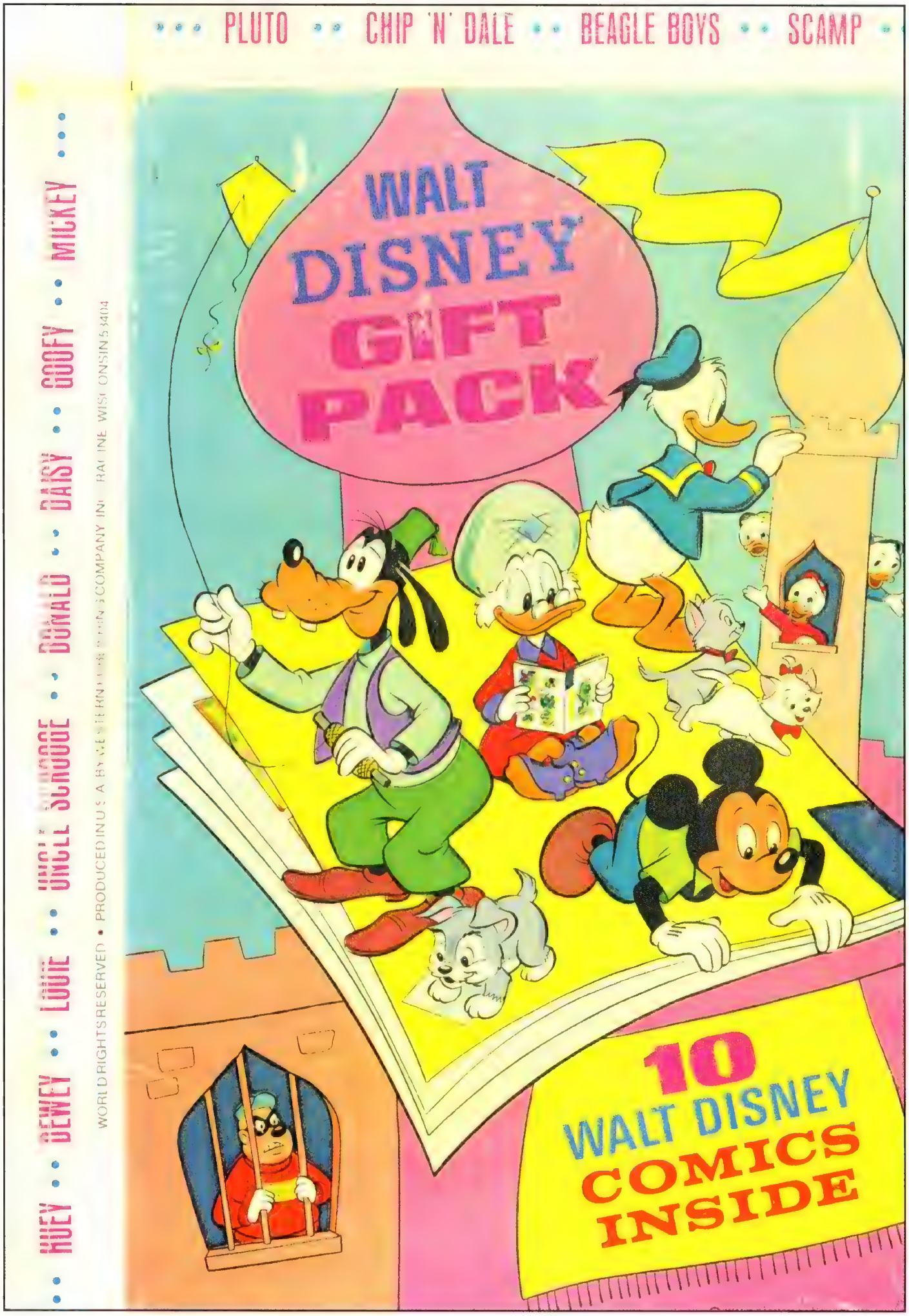
Police Comics #24
(Nov 1943)

© DC COMICS

COLOR GALLERY

The color photo above shows John K. Snyder, Jr., President of Diamond International Galleries and Chief Administrative Officer of Gemstone Publishing, with a gorgeous lot of mint condition Big Little Books which Steve Geppi recently acquired. The smaller black and white photo is of John many years ago, wearing his Walt Disney "Pedro and Pluto" t-shirt. We would like to publish more photos of well-known collectors when they were little kids, preferably photos that show them reading or holding a comic book! Send us a scan of yours and we'll print it!

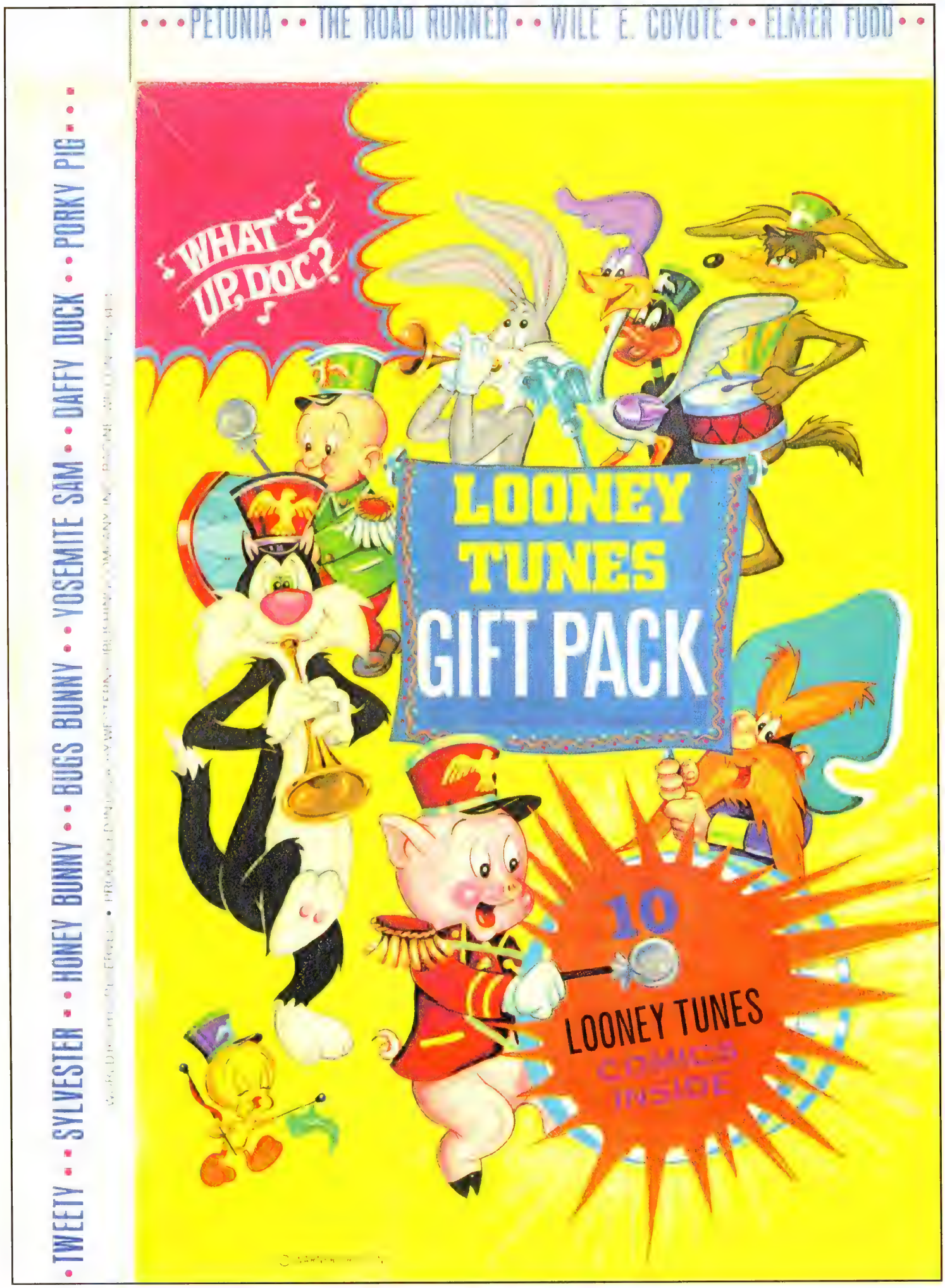
COLOR GALLERY



(This page and facing page) The boxes from the two known examples of the Whitman "Gift Packs," see the "Solving the Whitman Mystery, Part Two" article in this issue for details

© WALT DISNEY COMPANY

COLOR GALLERY


• • • PETUNIA • • THE ROAD RUNNER • • WILE E. COYOTE • • ELMER FUDD • •
• TWEETY • • SYLVESTER • • HONEY BUNNY • • BUGS BUNNY • • YOSEMITE SAM • • DAFFY DUCK • • PORKY PIG • • •
WHAT'S UP, DOC?
LOONEY TUNES
GIFT PACK
10
LOONEY TUNES
COMICS
INSIDE

© WARNER BROTHERS

Frazetta's Little Jewels

(Shown actual size)

by Dave Winiewicz

©2001

Frazetta's approach, whether it is oil, ink, or watercolor, is classical and traditional. There are no secret potions, paints, or exotic instruments responsible for Frazetta's magic. He begins with an idea, sometimes that idea comes directly from a text. Frazetta demands a wide creative latitude for his interpretation of content and imagery. Consider his approach in creating a painting. For many years Frank would start the creative process by taking a hot cup of coffee and sitting down on a faux zebra skin sofa next to a small light. He prefers to work in the late night with a little classical music providing a pleasant background. After a bit of thought and a few sips of coffee, a small pencil drawing is sketched in a modest sketchbook. If appropriate, Frazetta adds a bit of watercolor to this sketch to give it full form and to observe the effects

ARTWORK © 2001 FFRANK FRAZETTA

of light. Often, even this coloring process is unnecessary and Frazetta moves directly to the easel, relying on his intuitive sense of color correctness. This is really the sacred moment of inspiration and execution, the essence of creative intuition. Frazetta holds before him, in miniature, the first fruit of creative imagination—a direct flow from the inner soul of a great artist.

Consider the small watercolor study for the "Catgirl." All the elements are there: a jungle nude with an explosive body and erotic posture, swarming cats enlivening the background, and a lush jungle setting resplendent with mood and mystery and highly evocative vegetation. The huge twisting limbs draw the eye into the composition until the jungle temptress captures all our visual attention. At this point our mind begins to play with all the suggestive elements in the composition. Enticing forms and expressive color are in perfect balance and presentation. Of course, this little study was to become one of Frazetta's most famous and revered efforts. Through the years Frank went back 5 or 6 times to change and fine tune the visual elements. However, everything flowed from that initial study, that initial moment of creative inspiration.

Another example pictured is the study for the cover to the Edgar Rice Burroughs' novel, "The Swords of Mars." This study is different in that Frazetta frontloads the design with immediate in-your-face action. The heroic John Carter is in the middle of furious action and forms the apex of a traditional triangular composition. There is a wonderful rhythm in these bodies. The multi-spired fortress provides an engaging and exotic backdrop for the battle. This little rough is loaded with atmosphere and suggestibility. Frazetta skillfully limits his palette to beige and porcelain tones. The scene is earthy, yet combines with mysterious gleams and glows in the background. The finishing touch is a very bold and beautiful signature. Frazetta obviously enjoyed working on this idea and expressed his approval with a carefully executed signature. These little details should never be overlooked. Notice that Frazetta prefers to keep his inspiration fresh by avoiding a reliance on photo reference and other crutches. Frazetta is the definition of the creative artist; he outthinks everyone and he outdraws everyone. I think that Frazetta's watercolor studies are wildly underappreciated and undervalued. They will always be an ongoing delight to the genuine connoisseur who appreciates contemplating the magic of the creative process.

THE END OF WHITMAN COMICS

Solving The Whitman Mystery

86 COMIC BOOK MKTPLACE

by Jon McClure

PART TWO

[In McClure's first intallment, he provided a quick overview of the somewhat complicated publishing history of the many Western/Dell/Gold Key/Whitman comics and began to describe the circumstances and decisions which led to the ultimate end of the 'line.' With a remarkable set of facts about the variety of distribution schemes Whitman tried in the final years and a lot of grunt work comparing common elements in different titles and issues, he was able to prepare tables of releases from late 1971 to late 1980, and a set of calendar charts for the years 1982-84.

In this installment, the subject of bagged comics is explored, through both contemporary accounts and his understanding of events in hindsight. More details of the final days of Whitman are given, and what may be a unique comics collectible is described.]

Some Whitman collectors actually like their comics in the original package, the plastic bags they were sold in, preferably unopened! Although some historian may one day care enough to document which bagged sets exist and were distributed, it's not me! I will, however, provide an example of what exists for my favorite Gold Key title, *Uncle Scrooge*, which is a starting point for anyone who is interested in collecting this type of material. Examining the list of bagged sets provides insight into what Whitman's distribution was like, and reveals how many different combinations of bagged sets were distributed. Some bags featured pictures of the lead character on the front of the bag. Some bags even had eight digit serial numbers on them.

The following list of bagged Whitmans are known to exist for the title *Uncle Scrooge*, and although it provides some clues as to the distribution style of bagged comics, it is not a complete list. All bagged sets are 3-packs until 1983-84, when 2-packs of 60¢ cover issues were sold for 99¢. While *Uncle Scrooge* #174 and above have cover date codes, the earlier examples are all "no number" reprints.

Uncle Scrooge #114(9/74), Chip 'N' Dale #29(9/74), Donald Duck #158(9/74)
Uncle Scrooge #117(12/74), Aristokittens #7(4/75), Beagle Boys #24(4/75)
Uncle Scrooge #130(7/76), Scamp #30(7/76), WD C&S #430(7/76)
Uncle Scrooge #154(7/78), Bugs Bunny #198(7/78), Yosemite Sam #53(7/78)
Uncle Scrooge #155(8/78), Bugs Bunny #199(8/78), Porky Pig #83(8/78)
Uncle Scrooge #165(6/79), Daffy Duck 122(6/79), Beep Beep Roadrunner 80(6/79)
Uncle Scrooge #165(6/79), #166(7/79), #167(8/79)
Uncle Scrooge #168(9/79), #169(10/79), #170(11/79)
Uncle Scrooge #174(3/80), Donald Duck #220(6/80), Donald Duck #221(8/80)
Uncle Scrooge #175(4/80), Donald Duck #218(4/80), Winnie the Pooh #18(4/80)
Uncle Scrooge #177(6/80), Donald Duck #216(2/80), Donald Duck #217(3/80)
Uncle Scrooge #178(7/80), Donald Duck #221(8/80), WD C&S #479(6/80)
Uncle Scrooge #185(6/81), #186(7/81), #187(8/81)
Uncle Scrooge #193(2/82), Donald Duck #236(2/82), WD C&S #495(2/82)
Uncle Scrooge #200(6/83), #201(6/83)
Uncle Scrooge #202(7/83), #203(7/83)
Uncle Scrooge #204(8/83), #205(8/83)
Uncle Scrooge #206(4/84), #207(5/84)
Uncle Scrooge #208(6/84), #209(7/84)

As you can see, the contents of the bagged sets can vary considerably. While *Uncle Scrooge* #165 is included with more than one mix of other titles, books like *Donald Duck* #221 appeared in more than one *Uncle Scrooge* mix. Both Warner and Disney characters may be mixed in a bag, and cover dates may range up to five months apart. Although *Donald Duck* #217(3/80) is numbered #216 on the cover, it is correctly numbered #217 inside.

One of the most nearly unique items I've found in 28 years of collecting comics is the one inch thick, 9.5" by 7" cardboard box called the "Walt Disney Gift Pack," which contains ten Walt Disney Whitman "no number" reprints! The edges of the box list twelve different characters found in the comics inside, while the color cover shows a picture of Uncle Scrooge reading a Whitman comic book, and flying away on a magic carpet that is actually a giant Whitman comic! Mickey Mouse, Goofy, Donald Duck, and other characters are riding the comic with him, waving goodbye to Huey, Dewey, and Louie, while an angry Beagle Boy looks on in frustration. This is apparently one of only two known boxed sets of its kind, the other being a Warner Brothers box. The boxes were sold sealed in plastic, not in bags, and we know this because the Warner Brothers box was still sealed when I found it—a huge bargain at $12.00! The edges of the Warner box list eleven different characters found in the enclosed comics, while the color cover shows a marching band led by Porky Pig and Yosemite Sam, followed by Tweety and Sylvester, Elmer Fudd, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Beep Beep the Roadrunner and Wile E. Coyote, with the caption "What's Up, Doc?" Both boxes feature beautiful painted Disney artwork which has never been seen before! Most of these boxes were probably discarded as soon as they were opened, and these two may be the only surviving examples. It is unknown if other versions exist. Is there an action-adventure box, or different versions of the Disney and Warner boxes? The discovery of these two oddities opens up a new type of Whitman collectible, one far more desirable than bagged sets!

I found the Disney box at a flea market in Eugene, Oregon, in January 2001, and the Warner Brothers box at the same flea market one month later! Unfortunately, the Disney box was missing one issue of *Uncle Scrooge*. Because I had never seen one before, I snapped it up for the bargain price of $10.00.

The contents of the Disney box include nine "no number" Whitman reprints. Included in the package were *Chip 'N' Dale* #47 (7/77), *Daisy and Donald* #24 (7/77), *Donald Duck* #185 (7/77), *Huey, Dewey, and Louie* #45 (8/77), *Mickey Mouse* #173 (7/77), *Scamp* #36 (7/77), *Super Goof* #43 (9/77), *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #442 (7/77) and *Winnie-the-Pooh* #3 (9/77). *Uncle Scrooge* #142-144 are the possible choices for the missing book, dated July, August, and September respectively. Since July is the date of two-thirds of the comics in the group, #142 is the most likely choice, but without another boxed set it is impossible to say for sure. It is also likely that there were different mixes in some boxes, as ten comics allows for many more combinations.

The contents of the Warner Brothers box include ten "no number" Whitman reprints. This box included *Beep Beep the Roadrunner* #65 (7/77), *Bugs Bunny* #186-187 (7-8/77), *Daffy Duck* #109 (7/77), *Looney Tunes* #15 (8/77), *Porky Pig* #75-76 (7-8/77), *Tweety and Sylvester* #71-72 (7-8/77) and *Yosemite Sam* #45 (7/77). The Warner Brothers box duplicated titles, unlike the Disney box, because there were fewer Warner titles to choose from.

[SEE COLOR SECTION FOR VIEWS OF THE BOXES MENTIONED ABOVE]

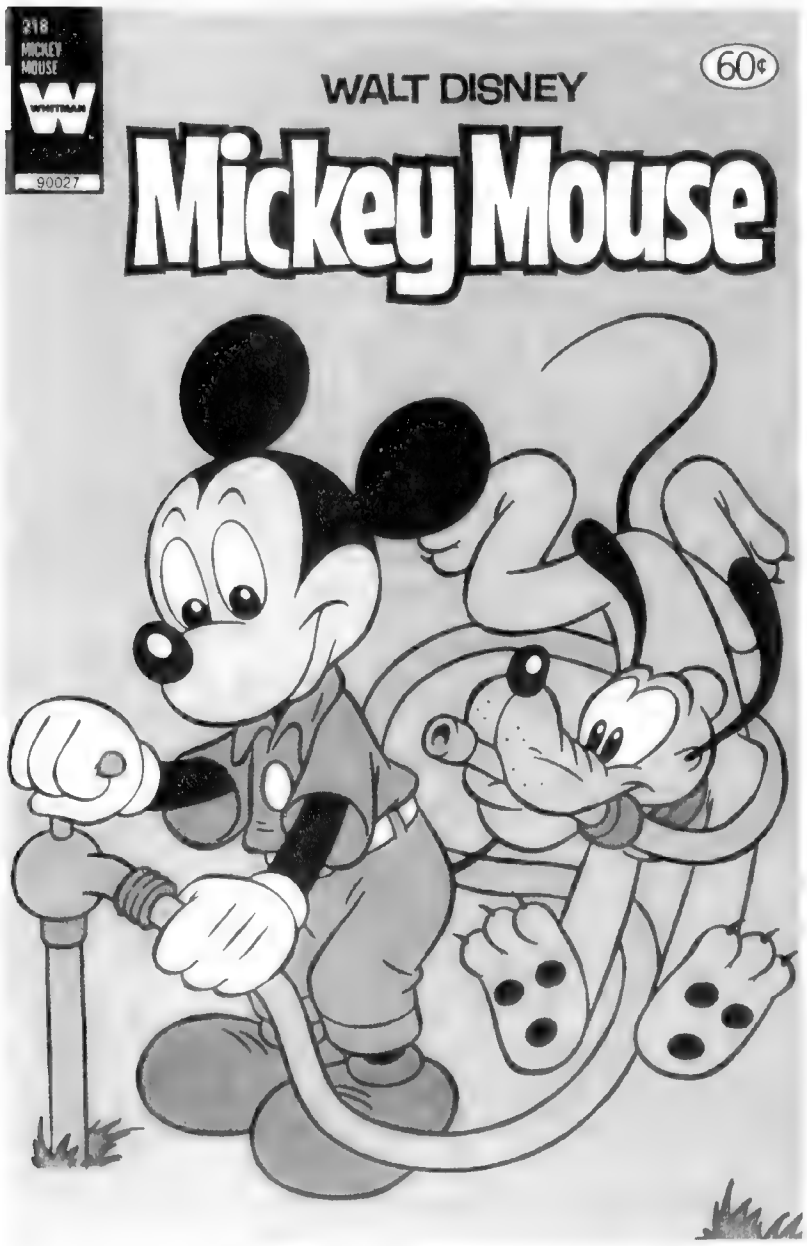
Why exactly did Western do what ultimately resulted in its demise? *The Comic Reader* #176 (1/80), quoted Wallace "Wally" Green, Gold Key's longtime editor, as saying the reason for switching from newsstand to bagged distribution was "...because the return percentage from newsstand distribution was growing alarmingly larger in recent years, and the percentages were far more profitable for the Whitman bagged comics distributed through department, variety and grocery stores. Since the Western Printing empire has far more contacts with these types of stores because of their extensive lines of coloring books, children's books, games, puzzles and playing cards, the decision to go exclusively to this type of distribution was not difficult to make." The next paragraph in *The Comic Reader* article announced the cancellation of seven titles: *Beagle Boys Versus Uncle Scrooge*; *Boris Karloff Tales Of Mystery*; *Bullwinkle and Rocky*; *Grimm's Ghost Stories*; *Happy Days*; *Ripley's Believe It Or Not!* and *Turok, Son Of Stone*. *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* was left a monthly, and all other titles were reduced from four to ten issues annually, dropping the total from 270 to 167 issues—an immediate loss of nearly 40 percent! Four of the cancelled titles were major Gold Key titles, including some of my favorites; like *Grimm's Ghost Stories*; *Ripley's Believe It Or Not!* and *Turok, Son Of Stone*.

The Comic Reader did a good job of following what Western was doing, but it was a difficult job at best. After exclusively bagged distribution went into effect in 1980, scheduled comics were regularly delayed, and sometimes axed altogether. *The Comic Reader* #178 (3/80), stated that *Battle of the Planets* #7, *Beetle Bailey* #133, *Buck Rogers* #8 and *Daffy Duck* #129 were delayed. What really captured everyone's frustration well was this plaintive request: "We're attempting to find out what's going on; in the meantime, anyone who sees any of the new bags in their area, please contact us and tell us what's in them." *The Comic Reader* #179 (4/80) reported the delays were indefinite, and that Beetle Bailey "is probably cancelled, though the others may continue. Confusion still reigns concerning the distribution of the bagged comics printed in January through March, none of which seem to have appeared anywhere."

The Comic Reader #180 (6/80) not only confirmed that Beetle Bailey has "been axed," they went on to report that "the only Whitmans distributed, apparently, are the few sample copies shipped to the New York offices and then given to

various New York Dealers." All of the Whitman comics that Western published were printed in Sparta, Illinois "...and shipped to Coffeyville, Kansas where they are bagged. Where they're going after that is a mystery that no one seems to know the answer to. Whitman's Wally Green suggests interested dealers contact their local Whitman Regional Sales Manager," but added, "some dealers have ordered this way with no results." *The Comic Reader* #183 (9/80) finally reported that some of the delayed bagged comics surfaced at a Milwaukee Target department store. Issue 185 (11/80) reported that "The 1981 Whitman schedule has appeared, and Surprise! Despite no one being able to find them on a regular basis the line is doing well enough to expand by five new titles."

The so-called new titles were actually revivals, namely *Turok, Son Of Stone*, *Grimm's Ghost Stories*; *Ripley's Believe It Or Not!*, *Space Family Robinson* and *Doctor Solar, Man Of The Atom*. It is worth noting that two titles, *Doctor Solar* and *The Aliens*, are the only Gold Key titles to be cancelled during the Silver Age, skip the Bronze Age and reappear in the 1980s. Frequencies of publication were bumped up, with *Bugs Bunny*, *Donald Duck* and *Uncle Scrooge* returning to monthly status.



Mickey Mouse #218 (Jun 1984), the undeleted notation "90027-208" on page one makes it seem to be the Aug 1982 issue—see **Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide** listings (and Part One of this article in **CBM** 85 for more details)

In *The Comic Reader* #189 (3/81) the editor stated he "...personally managed to find many of the Whitmans published since the bag-distribution system was instituted, either in the crazily combined baggings of the issues found in various places or single issues at conventions." He also said that "the fear that stores would not order new batches [until] the old ones were sold has been borne out." By the summer of 1981, delays and erratic distribution seemed to be the norm at Western. For example, *Flash Gordon* #30 had been printed in late 1980 and distributed in Australia and Canada, but the U.S. didn't see it until the reprint of #30 (7/81) appeared the following summer.

The Comic Reader #191 (5/81) reported that all but five April and May issues were delayed "due to problems with the printing and inks at World Color Press one month, and a continual problem with the inventory build-up at the bagging operation in Coffeyville, Kansas. Apparently Western revises [their schedule] whenever enough of the bagged comics on hand sell enough to rebuild the inventory by printing new issues." *The Comic Reader* went on to say that "the entire 1981 schedule was diminished...." by close to one third of what was planned. The most obvious sign they were having serious problems was that a total of nine "... books were skipped in the printing process."

As a result, the following six issue numbers were skipped in the printing process and do not exist: *Daffy Duck* #132-133, *Daisy and Donald* #48, *Buck Rogers* #10, *Popeye* #160-161 and *Woody Woodpecker* #192. They went on to say that "some confusion seems to have arisen from the delay in shipping mentioned in *The Comic Reader* #189, since some of the delayed books have turned up much sooner than the dates described. The on-sale dates we are giving are the 'newsstand' distribution dates." They then said "in a few cases, comic shops have been able to acquire fresh, off-the-presses copies, long before they've shown up anywhere," adding "there's nothing we can do about that."

During this time period, the Whitman comics returned to the format of Gold Key comics circa 1962-67, with 32 pages of comics in each issue, and just the three covers for advertising, except now the ads were house ads. New comics would be made up of all new material only if the comic was completely new, with no supply of material to reprint, and "otherwise...the format will be 22-24 pages of new material and eight to ten pages of reprints." The first comics to be "all

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new comics" issues began with issues cover dated August, or "108" on the covers.

The Comic Reader #192 (7/81) printed a long letter of clarification from Gold Key's Wally Green explaining that the material for the skipped issues would see print, but not under their original issue numbers. Some examples are: *Daffy Duck* #132-133, which appeared as #136-137, *Daisy and Donald* #48, which appeared as #52, *Popeye* #160, which appeared as #165 and *Woody Woodpecker* #192, which appeared as #195. Green mentioned the *Flash Gordon* problem, the fact that issue 30 was only distributed in Canada and Australia, by saying that it "isn't really as bad as it sounds...issues #31-33 were printed, and, I hope, distributed [and] bagged...These three issues are the comic version of the movie. All three were illustrated by Al Williamson. We still have plenty of them in bags in the warehouse. Issue 30 was printed a second time, this time for inclusion in our comics bags for domestic distribution. Remember, the first time around it went only to Canada and overseas. It will be followed by #34...."

The only difference between the 1980 edition not released in the U.S. and the 1981 reprint, other than the ads, is the cover price of 40¢ on the original and 50¢ on the reprint. Collectors with the reprint may find it interesting to note that the comics in their run are sequential in number but not publication date, which is unusual.

Collectors and dealers have long wondered why some Gold Key comics have white underneath the upper left hand corner trademark, instead of the usual yellow. These "variant" issues have been collected by some completists for years, and were generally assumed to be second printings. *The Comic Reader* #196 (11/81) dispelled the confusion by clearly explaining that "...the direct sales copies of all Whitmans will be printed without the yellow underneath the corner trademark and number...[which]...will prevent the direct sales copies from being confused with conventionally distributed copies and being returned for credit, which was one of the reasons distribution had been spotty to comic shops over the past year."

Up until this point, comics with the same title which were intended for distribution in the same bag had to wait until subsequent issues were printed in the following month or two, but *The Comic Reader* #196 (11/81) explained that changed when a new "...logic...arrived in the bagging-printing department: comics printed at the same time will appear in the same bags." With up to three new comics cover dated with three different months, this meant "...that the date codes on the cover will be even more meaningless than they already are," and in fact Whitman removed the dates just six months later. *Shroud Of Mystery* and *Shadow Play* were both mentioned as new titles coming out, but several months would pass before their release, along with *Grimm's Ghost Stories* #60, the last three Whitman comics released with a cover date, which was June 1982. Both contained material originally intended for cancelled Whitman mystery titles, with new narrators added to the artwork. *Thundarr the Barbarian*, based on the Ruby-Spears Saturday morning cartoon, was also mentioned as an upcoming title, as was *Astral Frontier*, a science-fiction anthology.

The Comic Reader #201 (5/82) showed the covers to the unreleased *Brothers of the Spear* #19 with no date code, as well as *Jungle Twins* #19, dated August 1982, and *Astral Frontier* #1, dated July 1982, with a Steve Ditko cover, which contained three science fiction stories. Not pictured was *Star Guider* #1, written by Jack C. Harris and drawn by Steve Ditko, *Wyatt Early* #1, by George Kashdan and Fred Carrillo and *Masters of The Zodiac* #1 by Rich Margopoulis and Tom Mandrake. Other unreleased books included *Buck Rogers* #17 by Nick Cuti and Al McWilliams; *Grimm's Ghost Stories* # 61 by Robin Snyder, Al McWilliams, George Kashdan, Jack Sparling, Roger McKenzie and Sal Trapani; *Thundarr the Barbarian* #1 by Marc Penberg and Winslow Mortimer and *Turok, Son of Stone* #131 with a cover by Tony DeZuniga and new stories by George Kashdan and Jack Sparling. The book was listed as *Turok* #132, which was probably a mistake, because #130 was listed in *The Comic Reader* #199 (2-3/82) with no mention of #131 in issue 200 (4/82), and in fact the last distributed issue was #130, dated April 1982. Another noteworthy item was the delay of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #500, which was scheduled to appear in the spring of 1982, cover-dated June, but which did not appear until early 1983. One can only imagine the frustration Disney collectors must have felt to have such a significant and historical event postponed because "...Whitman was forced into holding off publication of their line...while back stock was cleared out..."

The Comic Reader #203 (8/82) quoted Wally Green as saying that "The schedule delay...has now been made indefinite, with no firm date of release for the balance of the 1982 books...." This delay meant that *Thundarr the Barbarian* would be off the air before any possible release of the comic. This issue of *The Comic Reader* also showed the cover to the unreleased *Adventures of Mighty Mouse* #173, cover dated August, with Mighty Mouse carrying a giant "40" because it was to be the character's 40th anniversary. Also shown was the cover to the unpublished *Twilight Zone* #94, cover-dated August. *Twilight Zone* #92, cover dated May 1982, was the last issue distributed, and the cover to #93 has never been published.

The Comic Reader #209 (3/83) mentioned that Wally Green announced on January 27th that "...the Whitman line [is] being resumed as of the second week in February..." adding that "he was not certain whether direct distribution to shops would be resumed." Only four months' schedules were planned, "...with future plans dependent on how well these are distributed and sold." Unlike the 3-packs which were

ODDenda:

This copy of **Uncle Scrooge** #203 (Jul 1983, but note #202 is also a Jul 1983—see Whitman Chart in **CBM** 85!), with a reprint of Barks' "The Golden Fleecing" from **U.S.** #12, had the date notation removed from page one before printing but was not mentioned in **The Comics Reader**, thus precisely dating it was not possible until McClure's article.

It was purchased by a **CBM** subaltern between the publication of Parts One and Two of this article, along with **two** copies of **Popeye** #169 (Aug 1983). They were the only comics of this vintage (there were two 1940s Disney titles with them) among some yard sale miscellany. One assumes these three Whitmans with one duplication (all are yellow rectangle copies) originally came in the **same** bag. Bummer!

Is said subaltern misreading the **Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide** if he expected the **Popeye** #169 to have "168" on the cover? Both say "169."

used previously, the comics with 60¢ cover prices printed in 1983 were distributed in bags of two for 99¢. The Whitman cover prices were as meaningless as the dates, reflecting only the newsstand price of the other comics publishers. *Popeye* #171 was pictured with a cover date of October 1982, and *Tom and Jerry* #344 was shown with a cover date of September 1982, but of course neither book ever appeared with these expired dates, and in fact neither of these issues appeared at all until 1984. *The Comic Reader* astutely observed that "...dating these issues [is] so difficult [because] Western, probably in order to fulfill contracts with Disney, is publishing eight issues of *Uncle Scrooge* in four months and six of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*, creating what are essentially semi-monthlies." They also noted that 1982's new titles were scrapped, adding that the new schedules have no code numbers, but that *The Comic Reader* would continue to list them as if they were dated. *The Comic Reader* #210 (4/83) provided the information for dealers to get single copies to sell, so direct distribution was still available in 1983. It was suggested that dealers call to help Whitman get the right numbers, before the comics go to press.

The Comic Reader #214 (11/83) reported that Wally Green announced that "Whitman will commence another eight months of publishing beginning in November." The intention was to publish 72 comics through June of 1984, but only 47 were actually printed, and the last comics were scheduled to be published by Whitman on April 12th, 1984. "The adventure line is still in limbo," according to *The Comic Reader*, "though there is material ready to print whenever the decision is made to do so." The most important thing noted was that "Apparently, an action-adventure bag assortment remains undistributed in the Whitman warehouse, and this will be distributed during the next year as a test for that part of the line." The bagged set was never released, and one can only speculate what it contained, but my guess is that it probably included some of the unreleased 1982 books, particularly in light of the fact that Whitman never announced any action-adventure titles in 1983, or after the summer of 1982. If an undistributed three-pack contained *Star Guider* #1, drawn by Steve Ditko, and some other cool titles, like *Thundarr* #1 or *Astral Frontier* #1, and an employee or two in Sparta, Illinois happened to save a few of the bags for themselves, there could be a new "scarcest 1980s comic" on the market, and in the case of *Star Guider* #1 with Ditko art, it would be a super-collectible!

The Comic Reader #215 (12/83) mentioned that according to analysts and publishing sources, "...changes instituted by Mattel [management] 'dulled' Western's performance...." Mattel purchased Western in an attempt to ease its dependence on the seasonal toy business. Whitman comics was only one tiny branch of a publishing giant and, as such, they apparently fell through the cracks.

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The Comic Reader #218 (6/84) reported that "Whitman comics has officially shuttered its doors, with the company's longtime editor, Wally Green, currently out of work. Apparently, the books printed [during the] April 12th [printing schedule estimate] will be the final issues to be published by Whitman...." The issues with new material that were finished but never saw print are *Beep Beep the Road Runner* #106, *Bugs Bunny* #246 and #247, *Daffy Duck* #146, *Little Lulu* #269, *Looney Tunes* #48, *Porky Pig* #110 and #111, *Shirt Tales* #1 (based on the American Greeting Card Company cartoon characters), *Tweety and Sylvester* #122 and #123, *Woody Woodpecker* #202 and #203 and *Yosemite Sam* #82. *Chip 'N' Dale* #84, *Donald Duck* #246 and #247 and *Mickey Mouse* #219 were also scheduled to see print, but contained only reprints. It's hard to help wondering where the artwork to those unseen stories went after Western folded. There is enough unpublished material between these issues and all of the abandoned 1982 mystery and adventure titles for Whitman to have produced their own Xeroxed version of a *Cancelled Comics Cavalcade*, like DC comics did in 1978, which ended up being one of the coolest comics anomalies ever.

The Comic Reader #218 continued, "The Whitman Publishing Company had been owned by Mattel for the last few years, and many felt it had been mismanaged, especially the comic book division, whose production was continually interrupted by six-month-long lay-offs, in attempts to empty the warehouses of Whitman comic bags. The decision to move away from newsstand distribution proved fatal, and when Mattel unloaded Western at a depressed market price of $75,000,000 to New York investor Richard A. Bernstein, the auditors apparently didn't like what they saw when they looked at the books. This in no way affects any of Western's other publishing ventures...."

The Comic Reader #219 (9/84) reports that "Whitman's Golden Press arm did come through with *Gremlins* tie-in books...," adding that "...it is unknown whether these will be their final hurrah in the comic-book field." Ironically, this was the last issue of *The Comic Reader*.

As quoted above, *The Comic Reader* dated the Whitman comics as if they were continuing the Gold Key code dating, and in issue #209 (3/83) they stated "...What makes dating these issues so difficult is that Western...in order to fulfill contracts with Disney, is publishing eight issues of *Uncle Scrooge* in four months...." so it wasn't always easy. The need to classify a collectible by date exists because it is our habit to do so. Comics are traditionally assigned a month and year, not just an issue number. In *The Comic Reader* #192 (7/81), Wally Green stated that "When I say August I mean [two months later] "110"(10/81). September is "111"(11/81), July is "109"(9/81), etc...," so the pattern of dating the books was well established before *The Comic Reader* continued it, with the official date pushed forward two to two-and-a-half months ahead of the actual printing date, which remains the industry standard today, because it gives comics a longer "shelf life."

Gold Key comics may have skipped the 1980s, but long after the Whitman comics died, the Gold Key emblem made at least one surprise appearance in the 1990s! *Garfield Comics to Color*, a sixteen page 8.5" by 11" book, published by Western Publishing, has a Golden Book emblem on the front cover, and a Gold Key emblem on the back cover! It is copyright 1993 inside, and there may be other examples out there. Either way, it was a thrill to see the Gold Key symbol on a modern comic.

With a friend's help, I tracked down Wally Green and spoke with him in January 2001. Since he was Whitman's former managing editor, I asked him if he knew if any of the bagged comics that were printed and not distributed had survived, as mentioned in *The Comic Reader*. He was surprised to hear that anyone was interested in this stuff. In a kind, soft voice, he told me he did not know if any of the comics which were held back had survived. However, he did share fond memories of working with Arnold Drake, Fred Fredericks, and Alberto Giolitti, to name a few.

Finally, I asked him what he thought had killed Whitman comics. Wally said that "Because they went with lower print runs, the profit margin was less, and with reduced sales and a higher cost to print each issue, the profit margin wasn't there. They never took that [aspect] into consideration." He summed it up well by saying, "They didn't know what the hell they were doing."

Over twenty years earlier, in *The Comic Reader* #176 (1/80), Wally said that he "believes that if Marvel and DC had the same option open to them, they too might go this way," meaning give up on newsstand sales and go to strictly bagged distribution. It's hard to imagine us trying to date the last few issues of *Batman* or *Amazing Spider-Man*, both suffocated to death in a plastic bag in the mid-1980s.

[AUTHOR'S NOTE: Special thanks to Doug Sulipa and Michael Naiman for their help with research.]

Jon McClure has been a dealer, collector, and researcher of comic books for 28 years. In real life Jon is sales manager of a music publishing company, and lives with his wife Dyan and seven cats in Oregon.

PERSONAL FIRSTS

(In the) First Person

Secret Origin of a Comic Book Fan!

by Jennifer M. Contino

I discovered comic books by accident one day when I was six years old. I was already a total super-hero freak with tons of Mego action figures, Wonder Woman shirts, toys, light switch covers, banks, and other super-hero memorabilia, but I had never heard of comic books.

LOOK! THE BAT-SIGNAL!

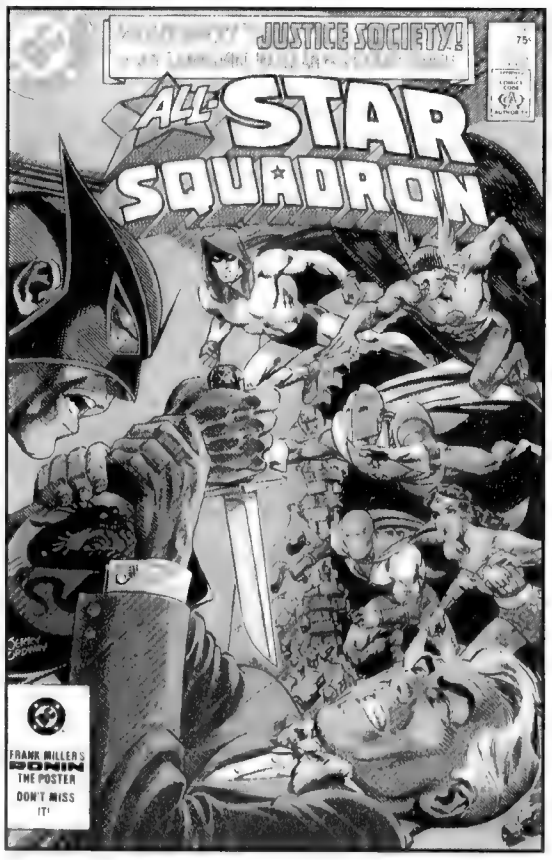
One day when I'm at the school library I venture out from the "kiddie" section that most first graders were assigned to into the "big kids" area. I was walking around just amazed at all these books that were so much more than "See Spot Run" or "Nat is a Cat" or any of the other small books that I could read in three or four minutes. These books were huge and I couldn't wait to choose one. I was looking up to the higher shelves—hey, I was ambitious and I knew the harder books were kept on the higher shelves—when I saw it, like a beacon, a symbol I couldn't ignore, the Bat-signal. There on the top shelf on the side of a purple book was the Bat-signal—something I was very familiar with! I got one of the bigger kids wandering the library to get the book down, and then marveled at this huge book that was almost as big as me, *Batman from the 30s to the 70s*.

That book became my library book so often that the librarian would go get it and have it ready by the time it was my turn in line. I devoured the book cover to cover each week and then gave it up for a week and then got it the following week. Our library had a rule you could not check out the same book for longer than one week at a time.

Being so young and being exposed to comics through only this medium, I had no clue or idea that actual comic books existed. I don't know when I would have discovered them if my dad hadn't noticed me looking so dejected one day. He wondered what my problem was when I pointed to some of the special pages within *Batman from the 30s to the 70s* that contained previous issues covers. I said something like, "I wish they still made books like this today." Then, much to my mother's chagrin, my father took me to the local newsstand and showed me that THEY DID! He bought me five comics that day, all featuring characters that I knew from TV: *Detective Comics*, *Batman*, *Superman*, *Action* and *Spectacular Spider-Man*, and the initial exposure to those characters in this form was enough to hook me for life.

GOOD OL' DAD

Every week—sometimes two times a week—my dad would either take me to the newsstand or bring me comics after work. Then he'd patiently tell me all the words I'd spell to him, or help me read my treasures. He always encouraged me to continue reading and listened as I'd ask him about this comic or that comic. He never was a comic book fan or steady reader of any comics other than some old 50s cowboy or western ones, but he encouraged me to continue my hobby. I remember seeing the ads for the *All-Star Squadron* comic that DC was going to release and asking my dad, "Was Wonder Woman a super-hero during World War II?" because my local newsstand wasn't getting *Wonder Woman* comics and I didn't even know there WERE *Wonder Woman* comics. My dad explained to me that he believed Wonder



Woman was a hero during WWII. I had a new comic to read.

Thanks to my father introducing me to comics at such an early age and helping me read some of them, by the time I reached the third grade in school I was already reading at a high school level. A few years later in fifth grade I was reading at a college junior's level and my vocabulary and levels continued to grow. Reading comics also helped to foster my creative spark and drive. All because my dad helped encourage my hobby and took an active interest in what I liked.

PRESCRIPTION: COMICS

Sure, comics have changed over the years, but the one factor that remains the same is that if you're a parent and you DO something with your kids—read, play games, sports, etc.—the chances are those kids are going to appreciate and enjoy the experience more, especially if you are fully vested in it. If you love comics, have or know children, and think you can't ever get them interested in the hobby, you're wrong! Just show them what you love and try to find a title that you think will make them consider the comics as more than just paper and images.

Below is a short list of (somewhat) modern comics that are easily accessible and enjoyable for readers of all ages:

Forty Winks
Herobear and the Kid
Little Gloomy
Batman Adventures
Patrick The Wolf Boy
Meridian
Impulse
Clan Apis

A comic book junkie's career can begin with just one comic; wouldn't it be nice if you were infecting this new generation with our love of comics?

[continued from page 38]

> *He was a slovenly, scrotum-cheeked rube in a straw hat and green polka-dot shirt who looked a bit like Alfred Hitchcock.*

It is satisfying to see Spiegelman's text alongside frequent and generous examples of Cole's comic book stories. Several stories are reprinted in their entirety: "The Eyes Have It," a 15-pager from *Police Comics* #22 (1943), "Sadly-Sadly Sanders," a 13-pager from *Plastic Man* #20 (1949), "Plague of Plastic People," a 13-pager from *Plastic Man* #22 (1950), "Murder, Morphine, and Me," a 14-pager from *True Crime Comics* #1 (1947)...that's a total of 55 pages, printed full size, full color. These examples bring the text to life. Most satisfying to the collector will be the full-page reproductions of covers from *Police*, *Plastic Man*, and *True Crime*.

It's a very "designy" book, with an almost "designer-gone-wild" look to it, but then that is the spirit of Cole's frenetic style. The final sequence in the book is a jolting 20-page text-less collage of bits and pieces of Cole's art together with his obituary and parts of the suicide note he wrote to Hugh Hefner, his boss at *Playboy*.

I have some trouble with the use of black text on a bright red background, red text on a yellow background, and red text on a black background. Although it is in keeping with the style of the book, it's hard for an old geezer like me to read! I like the way the book uses slick paper for the text and illustrations (especially the comic book covers) and switches to a pulpy uncoated stock (like a comic book) for the pages reprinted from comic books. The only two covers printed on the pulpy paper are *True Crime Comics* #1 and #3...you'd think they could have paginated the book so that those two covers could have been on slick paper.

But, I'm picking nits. All in all, this is an enjoyable read and at the same time is disturbing...as are all stories that end with a genius taking his own life. Go to your comic shop and get a copy, or order one from www.chronicle-books.com. You won't be sorry!

BOOK REVIEW by Paul Gravett

[continued from page 39]

evening alive, the night before, at a Playboy office party, unusually drinking a fair bit, anxious to tell something to art director Art Paul and sadly never getting the chance.

With no more firsthand information from Cole, Spiegelman pieces his life back together from surviving early drawings, photos and memories from Jack's youngest brother Dick and insights from admirers and colleagues, including Golden Age peers Gill Fox and Creig Flessel. Jack emerges as "a straight arrow—sort of a Boy Scout," as Fox remembers him, whom nobody, except presumably his wife, ever really got close to. Beneath his friendly public veneer, however, Spiegelman has found a crucial private issue, that Jack was unable to have children. This was a poorly understood problem and a social stigma at the time, and to Spiegelman "impotence—or, rather, the psychologically linked issue of potency as the power to conceive a child—was key to Cole." After the psychological freedom of ten years of uninhibited Plastic Man comics, Cole's talents wound up divided and stretched between his full-page wash cartoons for *Playboy*, sometimes frothy and sensuous, sometimes surprisingly somber and fueled by impotence and loss, and the confines of his cozy suburban family-values strip *Betsy and Me*. This sit-com about a young couple's courtship, marriage and setting up home could almost be autobiographical, except that Cole's alter ego, the ineffectual romantic Chester Tibbet, has a five-year-old son, Farley, a genius from birth who tends to show up his father. Considering its significance, I was disappointed that only three dailies are shown here. A lengthy run was recently reprinted in *Hogan's Alley Magazine* #6 and a fuller reading underlines Spiegelman's view that Cole's strip "reads like a suicide note delivered in daily installments."

According to Hugh Hefner, "the mystery of his death informs his work" and this is also born out when you read the choice complete stories reprinted here, warts and all, directly from the tanned, show-through pages of the comic books: three Plastic Mans, one each of "Wun Cloo," "Burp the Twerp" and "Woozy Winks," and the histrionic "Murder, Morphine and Me" from *True Crime* #2. Of course, Plastic Man himself seethes with manic energy, his standout all-red outfit grabbing your eyeballs across each page and ceaselessly stretching and shape-shifting. But within these zany frolics there can be angst and morbidity. In "The Eyes Have It" from *Police Comics* #22, for example, Plas rumbles a kidnap racket selling European war orphans to childless American couples desperate to adopt (did the Coles ever try adoption, I wonder?). Plas rescues the mute "Bright Eyes," a boy straight out of those kitsch paintings of urchins with big, weepy eyes, who, in a cruel twist, is the gang boss's own traumatized son. Then in "Sadly-Sadly" from *Plastic Man* #26, a crook uses his heartbreaking expression to make people gush soda fountains of tears and bend them to his will. If you'll indulge me mixing my metaphors and nursery rhymes, if a person's comics, like their eyes, can truly be "a window to the soul," then our Jack "Old King" Cole was definitely not "a merry old soul."

The bald, matter-of-fact newspaper report of a local cartoonist's death kicks off a "portfolio of polymorphously perverse plasticity" that concludes this biography. Over nine spreads, Spiegelman and designer Chip Kidd mix and remix panels, balloons, cutups, photos, texts, words, even the index, rotating, enlarging, duplicating them, and tearing the reader along a roller coaster ride of dementia and death. Their collaged compositions crescendo almost musically, climaxing at an image of Plastic Man's sweating face and his goggles reflecting Woozy being strangled, the cover detail sliced in two by one huge agonized "No!" But this lone cry is drowned out on the last page by a staccato gun burst of "Yes"es next to a panel of a man being shot, repeated as if part of an endless loop of film, pounding the final, emphatic note. Not everyone is going to appreciate this finale; to some it will seem too strange and heavy-handed. But on reflection, I realize that, after the formal biography and complete stories, these fractured closing pages from the "scrapbook of a madman" take us inside Cole's suicidal state of mind, as his life flashes before his eyes. It makes a sort of sense for this book, like Cole himself, to self-destruct too.

Art Spiegelman is a particularly sympathetic yet unflinching biographer for Cole, because he has had to deal with suicide in his own family. He recounted his mother's suicide and his mental problems in his harrowingly honest strip "Prisoner on The Hell Planet." This four-page confessional, and his Maus graphic novel that now contains it, offered him at least some catharsis to confront his emotions, using his comics as psychotherapy. Cole was around long before Underground Comix and graphic novels, but Spiegelman argues a convincing case here that Cole too found some sort of expressive release for his deep anxieties through his comics and cartoons. But in the end it was not enough to prevent him from pulling the trigger.

Paul Gravett, co-editor of Escape, *the British comics culture magazine of the 1980s, has been writing articles and curating exhibitions on comics in Britain and Europe for twenty years.*

[continued from page 35]

patriotic do-gooder and the first super-hero team could be put out to pasture. And proving the cyclical nature of comics, when the super-heroes eventually came back into favor in the late '50s/early '60s, it was largely at the expense of the horror and western genres.

The key point to consider here is that the period of time between the end of the Golden Age and the beginning of the Silver Age was not an age at all; it was simply an interregnum period that bridges the two eras. While some are now opting to call this period the "Atomic Age"—which is a nickname in general use for the late '40s/early '50s and has little to do with describing the actual comic books of that time—there's no getting away from the fact that there's a definite non-heroic interregnum between the Golden and Silver Ages.

Just as most of the super-heroes had vanished by the end of the Golden Age, the last days of the Silver Age saw similar carnage inflicted on the super-hero genre that had dominated the 1960s. It wasn't merely that many individual hero-based titles were falling by the wayside, such as DC's *Green Lantern*, *Atom*, *Hawkman* and *Aquaman*, and Marvel's *Silver Surfer*, *Captain Marvel* and *Doctor Strange*; more significant was that entire lines of comic books met their demise in the late '60s/early '70s, such as ACG, Dell, King and Tower, as well as the short-lived super-hero titles from mainstays Archie, Charlton and Harvey.

Not every super-hero title was canceled at the end of the Silver Age, of course, and the genre was certainly in better shape than it had been during the early '50s interregnum. Nevertheless, after enjoying several years of tremendous prosperity during the "Bat-mania" years of the mid-'60s, the super-hero genre crashed and burned to such an extent that by the early 1970s another genre was able to rise from out of its CCA-imposed grave to again threaten the super-heroes and dominate the industry: mystery/horror comics.

Helped along in part by Warren's successful line of EC-inspired black-and-white comics magazines, horror comics returned to four-color glory in a big way when DC revamped such titles as *House of Mystery* and *Unexpected* to feature anthology horror stories instead of lightweight super-heroics. Indeed, by the time the 1970s rolled in, most of the comics publishers had decided to cash in one way or another on what ended up becoming another interregnum period, this one bridging the Silver and Bronze Ages, and which we can dub the "Weird Age."

Consider this: In the years which immediately followed the Silver Age—1971-75—DC launched twice as many mystery or "weird" titles as it did super-hero titles. In fact, the two most successful titles launched in the early 1970s by DC were *Ghosts* and *Weird War Tales*, both of which lasted more than 100 issues. The situation was much the same at Marvel, although it was fantasy (*Conan the Barbarian*) and monster-based titles (*Tomb of Dracula*), rather than anthol-

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A BRAZEN SOLUTION

by Ed Rock

Are we still too close to the beginning of the Bronze Age to generally agree on book number one? Evidently; witness the two solid articles on these pages. But if the solution is to find a widely imitated form and define that form, here we go:

The milepost Ages *are* super-centric, and there are differences between the types of heroes and their self-awareness in the different Ages.

The Golden Age heroes were self-aware of themselves as heroes utterly, and all else was secondary to that. They fought evil, and were themselves good without real effort. They just *were*, powers and costumes and all.

The Silver Age heroes were aware of the bizarreness of their costumes and powers, some areas of grey had appeared (witness Superman's Luthor, who was a hero on one planet). But the efforts to reconcile this with the 'real' elements of human life were depicted in sophomorically broad, soap opera strokes.

LAST SILVER?

By the time of the Bronze Age, heroes and villains used similar methods, had similar personalities and were produced in a nearly uniform style across the industry. Characters' self-awareness often consisted of self-invention according to a set of misogynist and violent schemata (John Wayne wore khakis because khakis were practical, today's merchants offer khakis because advertising can confuse consumers about the difference between practicality and a popular culture persona).

But there was a super-hero Age, arguably *like* an interregnum, between the Silver and the Bronze.

With *Superman* #232 (Dec 1970), a 'Giant' with Silver, not Golden, Age reprints and 64, not 80, pages; the Silver Age effectively ends. Next

[continued on page 56]

BEGINNING THE BRONZE AGE OF COMICS by David Blanchard

[continued from page 55]

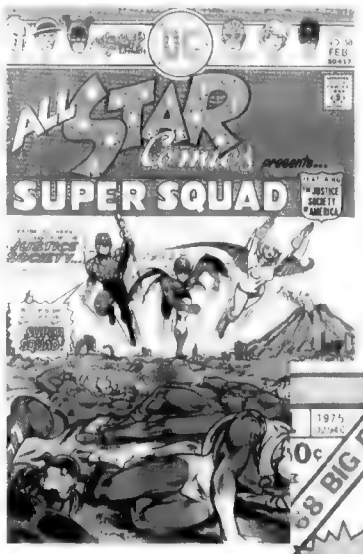
ogy horror, which met with the greatest success at that company. Even Archie (with its Red Circle line) and Harvey (*Richie Rich Vault of Mystery*) came up with horror comics, and the short-lived Skywald line of comics existed primarily to publish horror and western titles.

Significantly, though, since it was only an interregnum rather than a full-blown age, this "Weird Age" soon played itself out. While a couple fantasy-oriented titles proved to have long-term staying power, mostly by emphasizing heroics rather than horror (namely, *Conan* and DC's *Warlord*), virtually the entire field of mystery/horror comics had vanished by the early 1980s. And what killed off all those horror comics, you wonder? Once again, it was the super-heroes, who by 1975 were ready for yet another heyday on the spinracks.

The most important comic book of the past quarter century appeared in Summer 1975—Marvel's *Giant-Size X-Men* #1—which has the distinction of being the first actual Bronze Age comic. It was this title, more than any other, that helped jump-start a new interest in super-hero comics, and much like *Showcase* #4 introduced a Silver Age hero with a Golden Age name, the Bronze Age X-Men title was a spiritual rebirth of the former Silver Age team, with the focus shifted to a new cast of characters.

Marvel's success with the relaunched X-Men proved to be contagious throughout the entire industry. The push to the direct sales market in the early 1980s was fueled by a rapid return to the stands of super-hero comics in every way, shape and form.

New publishers began to sprout from the woodwork, all of them pushing super-heroes (as well as other genres), such as Pacific, Eclipse, First, and Comico.



Following closely on Marvel's heels, DC entered the Bronze Age by reviving one of the greatest Golden Age comics, **All-Star Comics** #58 (Jan-Feb 1976).

The Bronze Age of Comic Books officially began with the Summer 1975 publication of Marvel's **Giant-Size X-Men** #1.

Just a few months after *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 hit the stands, DC officially entered the Bronze Age with its revival of the legendary Golden Age team book, *All-Star Comics*, with issue #58 (Jan-Feb 1976), followed in short order by another super-hero team book (again featuring Golden Age characters), *Freedom Fighters* #1 (Mar-Apr 1976). These were Golden Age revivals in name only, though, since both titles were built very much on the New X-Men model, a trend which would reach its apex in 1980 with the debut of *The New Teen Titans*.

Few would quarrel that *The X-Men* has been the most dominant comic book on the stands for the past 20 years; indeed, the comic book industry would be far different (undoubtedly, far poorer, at least financially) had it not been for the mid-'70s debut of the angst-ridden team of mutants. Thus, having recognized ***Giant-Size X-Men* #1** as the most influential comic of its day and as the title that launched the super-hero genre on its way to its third great era, we can conclude that **the Bronze Age began in the summer of 1975**.

Dave Blanchard lives with his wife and two daughters in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. Special thanks to Tim Fitzpatrick.

A BRAZEN SOLUTION by Ed Rock

[continued from page 55]

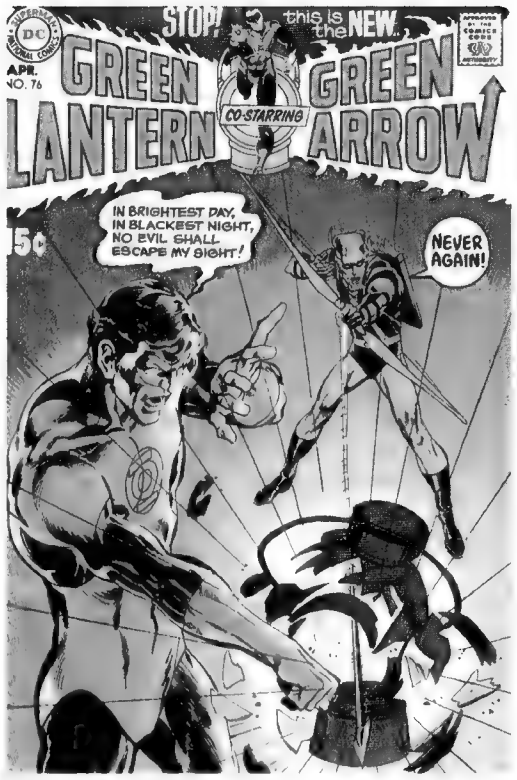
issue, Kryptonite disappears in the first Superman jiggery-pokery; Jack Kirby is gone from Marvel and, at DC, wants to both start a new mythos and perhaps ramrod the Superman books.

But more than this, at this time there was a new self-awareness available, a fully-human dimension allowing for a range of types (all of which were forced to take the fantastic elements as a given) including a specific one which defined a new age.

[continued on next page]

(Left) **The Hawk and the Dove** #2 (Oct/Nov 1968), note the obliterated 12¢ and the rubber stamped new price, 15¢

(Right) **Green Lantern** #76 (Apr 1970) had super-heroes dealing with nearly-real problems in a nearly-real way, and the anti-hero Ollie Queen (Green Arrow)



Showcase #75 (Jun 1968) introduced Hawk and Dove, the former a hero who was also an unreformable bully and the latter a hero who would not meet villains on their own violent terms. They operated in isolation from the rest of the DC mythos, and dealt (sometimes in interior monologues) with the issues of the day. They went on immediately to six issues of their own title (bridging the 12¢- to 15¢-cover divide and ending Jun-Jul 1969) but were longlived only in the sense that DC eventually used again any character they ever published.

The shape was formed, who would fill it? Marvel's Conan, flawed and largely unreformable, was also insulated from the rest of the super-heroes and his first appearance in comics was an event that galvanized fans and influenced pros. *Conan the Barbarian* was cover-dated October 1970, and continued well into the '90s. The stories and characters attempted an adult level. The drawback: Conan is simply not a super-hero.

Where then to find a longlived, influential example of temporily-aware, mature and maddeningly and unreformably flawed genuine super-hero?

There is one answer: The ONeil/Adams issues of DC's ***Green Lantern*. Issue 76** (Apr 1970) followed the fit and start of the Skeates/Ditko Hawk and Dove and actually preceded *Conan* #1. **First book of a Brazen Age.**

Ed Rock is a CBM *staffer, & comic fan of 40+ years standing (actifan for 30+ years).*

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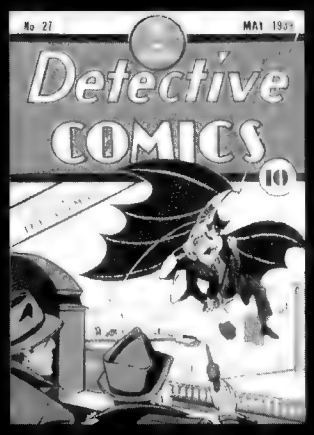

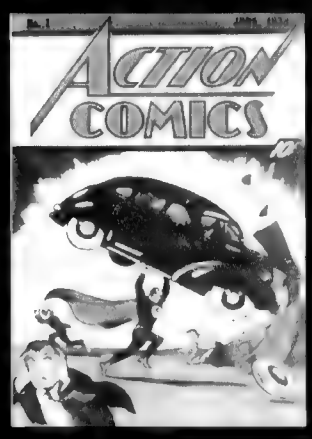

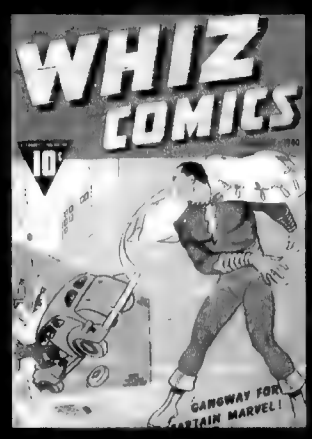

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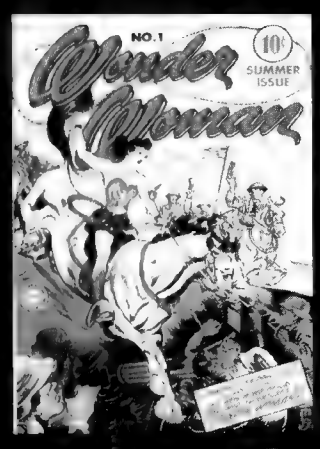

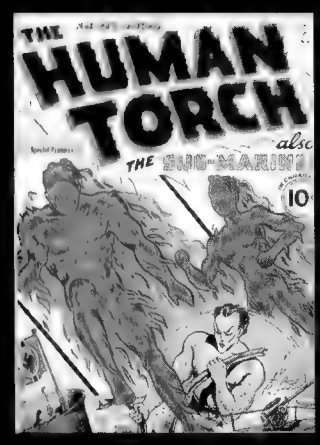

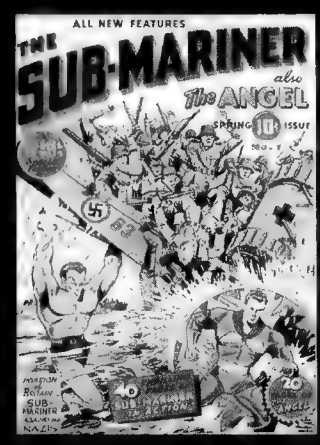

Inspiration Central

Subject: MIKE MIGNOLA A GOLDEN AGE BEACON

by Bill Baker

[Editor's Note: Each issue we'll take a look at what inspired some of the greatest creators in comics to pursue their particular four color careers. We'll be talking with Golden Age and Silver Age legends, and we'll also chat with today's creators, who were motivated by some of those same legends. For this edition, we talked with ***Mike Mignola****, creator of* Hellboy *and one of the key designers of this summer's Disney extravaganza,* Atlantis.*]*

Mike Mignola started working professionally as a comics artist just over two decades ago. He's made much of his time since. In addition to working on a majority of the top characters in DC's stable, he's also done a considerable amount of work for Marvel and other companies. He's even expanded his range to include design work on a number of major movie releases, including Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula*, as well as the forthcoming Blade sequel and Disney's new animated feature, *Atlantis*. But it's probably his body of work on *Hellboy*, his creator-owned series concerning the adventures of a supernatural investigator and his cohorts, that he's best known for among comic aficionados today.

Comic Book Marketplace: Is there a particular artist, or group of artists, who influenced and inspired you when you were a young lad and dreaming of creating comics?

Mike Mignola: Well, the stuff I read as a kid—I was a Marvel brat, so my brothers and I didn't even look at DC Comics. I missed *The Shadow*, I missed *Swamp Thing*, I missed all that stuff. We divvied up all the Marvel titles, so between the three of us we collected everything Marvel did. And my specialties were Thor and The Fantastic Four, Jack Kirby stuff. I mean, by the time I was reading Kirby wasn't doing it anymore, but they were reprinting some of that stuff. So I was picking up the reprints. And I didn't realize....

Artistically, Jack wasn't an influence on me, early on. But certainly in later years, he became probably the most important comic book field artistic reference. It's a roundabout thing, because I was inspired by the Kirby stories, but I never sat down and copied Jack before. But I loved what he was doing. *Fantastic Four*, I think #67, in particular, I saw that one—my cousin had it when I was a little kid—and it made me go crazy. I loved to look at that stuff.

That was responding to the stuff as a fan, as a kid. Then I got away from that and, as an artist, I was looking much more at, as I got older, Frank Frazetta, and then Bernie Wrightson, and that's what I spent years trying to copy, and trying to become that kind of an artist. And I learned a lot. Then, years later, doing super-hero comics, then I started looking back at Jack. Especially when I did the *Cosmic Odyssey*, that's when I really moved from just being a childhood fan of Kirby to actually bringing that into my work as an artist. Now that's an oversimplified view of how things went, but [essentially it was] going from the gut-level response as a kid to Jack, then going through this more illustrative approach, and then bringing Jack back into the mix.

CBM: Are there one or two aspects of Jack's work that you can point to that have had the biggest impact on your style?

MIGNOLA: The dynamics. His stuff is so powerful, and it's so strong. That's actually one of the biggest problems I have with a lot of guys doing super-hero comics is they do wimpy super-hero comics. [General laughter] Jack just had all this wonderful power to the stuff, and very few guys in mainstream comics have that. Walt Simonson has it, but most guys they get very caught up in little detail stuff. And Jack was all about the Big Picture, and the power.

And that's one of the things that translated into my work, artistically: It doesn't really need to be right, it just needs to be strong. And the abstract quality of his work really made a huge impact [as well].

So, it was kind of nice to have gone through a more traditional type of illustrative drawing [phase], and certainly I learned tons from copying Frazetta paintings, and then copying Bernie Wrightson's work, and other people like that. Much more, ya know, traditional tight draftsmanship. 'Cause, to have learned as much as I did through that, and then bring in the abstract quality of Kirby's to add to that, then end up with me, somehow.

Bill Baker is a freelance journalist whose work appears frequently on the www.wizardworld.com website. His "Inspiration Central" column appears monthly in CBM.

A Plethora of Phoney Firsts in Creator's Rights

Whether out of sturdy purpose or sheer perversity, Bud Fisher, as I said last time we met, advanced the cause of creator's rights at a time when the concept was stunningly unheard of. The work of cartoonists was not seen then as "art" in any sense that made them creators; and the notion of a newspaper artist having any rights at all was scarcely on a firm footing. Fisher copyrighted *Mutt and Jeff* in 1907, virtually at the birth of the strip, and, later, registered the name as a trademark. And these two acts (the first, a furtive coup behind his editor's back) established his rights to a property that was eventually worth thousands, even millions, to the owner.

Comic book cartoonists have so recently acquired the chutzpah to demand ownership of their work that we usually think that the cartoonist's owning his own work is an uncommon circumstance. And it is. Or has been. Comic book publishers and feature syndicates have long presumed to own the work of those who produce for them. But that was not always the case. And, indeed, creator ownership is not unprecedented in the annals of cartooning, and, in fact, the precedents oft referred to (Gene Ahern, Milton Caniff, Roy Crane) are not actually precedential.

Histories of comics usually cite Caniff as having plowed a new furrow when he gave up *Terry and the Pirates* in 1946 in order to start a new strip, *Steve Canyon*, that he, not the syndicate, would own. Certainly there was enough ballyhoo about Caniff's move to attract attention—both at the time and in the history books. But he wasn't the pacesetter. Gene Ahern had done the same in 1936 when he defected from the NEA syndicate and his panel feature *Our Boarding House* to start *Room and Board*, a virtual carbon copy of his NEA cartoon, at King Features. And Roy Crane jumped the NEA ship, too—in 1943, leaving *Wash Tubbs and Captain Easy* and starting *Buz Sawyer* at King. Both Ahern and Crane secured the rights to their new strips.

All three of these cartoonists displayed no little daring in their desertions: they were leaving highly regarded features in order to gain ownership of their work, and they could have no way of knowing whether their new creations would be as popular as their first-born. And in all three instances, although the new strips were highly polished examples of the cartooning craft, it seems to me (and other observers of similarly dubious astuteness) that all three lacked the spark that had ignited and energized their predecessors.

The case of Bud Fisher demonstrates that Caniff wasn't the first to own his strip. Nor was Crane nor Ahern. Fisher, however, was not the first cartoonist to see the value in copyrighting his work. Nor were his legal battles (1915-1921) against the Hearst Works the first on behalf of a creator's right to his intellectual property.

The first legal battle over a cartoonist's right to his work was probably in 1906 when Richard Outcault sued the *New York Herald*. Outcault had originated *Buster Brown* in May 1902 at the *Herald*, then left at the end of 1905 for the greener pastures William Randolph Hearst was cultivating at the *New York Journal*. (And this wasn't the first time Hearst had lured Outcault to his side: he'd done it when Outcault was producing the Yellow Kid at the *New York World*, too, ten years earlier.) The *Herald* continued to publish *Buster Brown* after Outcault's departure, hiring another artist to do it. Outcault's suit argued that he had an exclusive right to his creation and that the *Herald* ought to stop publishing *Buster Brown*.

The *Herald* counter-sued, maintaining that *Buster Brown* was its property and that it had a right to continue its publication.

The two cases, oddly, were tried in the same court by the same judge. The judge found in favor of the *Herald* in the second case, holding that the strip had become an exclusive trademark of the newspaper through its continued copyrighted publication over the previous three-and-a-half

Outcault as seen by himself. Drawn for **Everybody's Magazine** in 1905, long after Outcault had left the Yellow Kid, the Kid is depicted as returning from the land of the departed (note angel's wings) and saying, "Dis is worth coming back to see." Outcault is saying, "Gee! I didn't see that."

Buster on the defensive. The moral gimmick with **Buster Brown** was that the kid always misbehaved and was always punished and thereby inevitably learned his lesson.

years. As for Outcault's contention, the judge denied it. Outcault, who had not copyrighted the strip in his name, attempted to assert some "common law title to the individual figures displayed, which he can maintain to the exclusion of others"—a notion the judge found no authority to support, saying it was therefore "entirely novel and does not commend itself as sound."

Mark D. Winchester covers all this litigious ground in an article in the short-lived *Inks: Cartoon and Comic Art Studies* in May 1995 (Volume 2, Number 2). He summarizes the effect of the judge's decision:

"In the view of the court, the title (*Buster Brown*) and the individual published drawings were subject to copyright, but the characters in general (including elements of likeness, costume, and demeanor) were not tangible enough to merit copyright nor trademark. Outcault was free to use the character of Buster Brown but not the name or the title."

By the same token, the *Herald* was free to hire another artist to produce *Buster Brown* and to continue to publish the feature under that name.

Rudolph Dirks by Rudolph Dirks

If this verdict sounds familiar, it's because so many histories of cartooning have referred to it as a landmark decision. But they usually say the decision was arrived at in regard to Rudolph Dirks' *Katzenjammer Kids*. Or Outcault's earlier creation, the Yellow Kid. I've seen both the Dirks case and the Yellow Kid case called "landmark decisions" that establish exactly the same thing–namely, that the newspaper has a right to the title of the strip but the creator "owns" the characters and can therefore produce features about them elsewhere with impunity. Clearly, neither the Dirks' case nor the Yellow Kid case were "landmark decisions": a landmark decision is a watershed event, and if one had been a landmark decision, the other would not be.

In the Dirks case, according to the popular mythology, the cartoonist went on vacation from the Hearst paper and when he returned, Dirks found that Hearst had hired someone else to continue the strip *The Katzenjammer*

A panel from Dirks' **Katzenjammer Kids** (probably dating before 1900; the strip began in December 1897).

Kids and wouldn't hire Dirks back. So Dirks went to the rival *New York World* and started drawing Hans and Fritz again. Hearst filed an objection, and the subsequent legal action produced a "landmark decision" that gave Dirks the right to draw the characters but not to use the title, which was deemed the property of Hearst's *Journal*.

What actually happened, according to Winchester's well-documented article, is that Hearst brought a suit to restrain Dirks from working for the competition on the grounds that the *Journal* had a contract with Dirks that included an exclusivity clause. The judge threw the case out, though, because Hearst evidently expected the contract to enable him to keep Dirks off the payroll while also preventing his working anywhere else at his trade. "Unenforceable to injunction" was the verdict. Nothing about a creator's right to his characters or a newspaper's right to the title.

The Yellow Kid case is another figment, Winchester believes. If there had been a Yellow Kid case establishing the precedent that was actually established in the *Buster Brown* case, then the *Buster Brown* case would never have made it to a courtroom.

What's more, Winchester, who searched court records for the period, could find no record of a Yellow Kid case.

Probably, the "Yellow Kid case" was invented by historians who, familiar with present-day litigiousness, assumed that everyone in 1896 was similarly eager to dash into court at the slightest provocation and that, therefore, there must have been a Yellow Kid case because two newspapers, Hearst's *New York Journal*, and Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, both published a cartoon feature starring the same jug-eared, bald-headed kid in a yellow nightshirt. Surely, both could not legally publish the same feature. Surely, there must've been a suit.

Nope. Not so.

Arguably the first appearance of the Yellow Kid is Outcault's cartoon for **Truth**, Feb 9, 1895 (page 10)

Or, if so, there's no record of it. Perhaps the case was settled out of court, but if it had been, then Outcault, who was involved in both the Yellow Kid and *Buster Brown* cases, would probably have made some reference in the *Buster Brown* effort to a previous legal maneuver. But there is no reference to a Yellow Kid decision, in or out of court, in the records of the *Buster Brown* case.

On the face of it, the *Buster Brown* case seems to have affirmed in a court of law what was already accepted in common practice. And it was probably a common practice as far back as the time that the *Journal* and the *World* fought circulation battles with the Yellow Kid in the trenches—or, less metaphorically, posters of the Yellow Kid on the delivery wagons taking bundles of newspapers to street vendors throughout lower Manhattan.

Outcault's insouciant Mickey Dugan, the nefarious "Yellow Kid" of cartooning legend and lore

And Outcault was doubtless thoroughly aware of the practice. So was Hearst and so was Pulitzer. When Outcault left the *World* in October 1986 to produce the Yellow Kid cartoon for Hearst's *Journal*, the name of the feature was changed from "Hogan's Alley" (the title used at the *World*) to "McFadden's Row of Flats." Clearly, the supposition at the Hearst paper was that the *World* "owned" the title "Hogan's Alley." And so the *Journal* expected to avoid legal action by changing the name of the cartoon. But the characters were the same in both features.

Still, Outcault evidently knew the value of owning the fruits of his creative labors. Just before leaving the *World* for the *Journal*, he filed an application (dated September 7, 1896) with the Library of Congress for copyright on "The Yellow Dugan Kid" (Mickey Dugan was the Kid's actual name). Outcault's letter describes the Kid's unique features (big ears, bald head, only two teeth) and is accompanied by a sketch of the character.

It's not clear whether Outcault's application was successful. He filed two more attempts before the end of the year, and while all three applications bear "copyright registration" numbers, those numbers may be simply log numbers, indicating that the application had been received. Ian Gordon (in his book, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture*) reports that a letter from the Treasury Department dated April 15, 1897, "stated that on the advice of the Librarian of Congress the department held that only the title 'The Yellow Kid' and not the Kid's likeness had been copyright-

ed because of an irregularity in the application."

There seems to be no subsequent application so presumably Outcault was satisfied to have copyrighted just the name of his creation, whatever the "irregularity" in his application may have been.

And probably owning the name of one's creation was sufficient. Outcault certainly went to court enough in later years. The Yellow Kid had been widely merchandised, his likeness appearing on all sorts of products. Presumably, Outcault profited not at all from these enterprises. And he doubtless resolved not to be left out in the cold ever again. In the teens, he formed an agency to merchandise his characters (mostly Buster Brown), and in those years, Winchester tells us, the cartoonist brought more than thirty lawsuits against entities that used his creations without permission or payment of fees.

The first published picture of Cox's Brownies (from "The Brownies' Ride" in St. Nicholas).

That Outcault realized early the importance of owning a copyright to his character is evident not only in his 1896 applications for copyright but in the very earliest appearances of the character that later became known as the Yellow Kid.

The first cartoon with a discernible Yellow Kid in it was drawn for *Truth* magazine, February 9, 1895. It was subsequently reprinted in the *World* on February 17. The cartoon depicts a street urchin who is painting large eyes on the face of another kid, saying, "Dere, Chimmey! If Palmer Cox wuz t' see yer, he'd git yer copyrighted in a minute." The prototypical Yellow Kid is but one of several witnesses to this witticism, and it's the witticism that reveals just how widely it was realized that copyrighting something was a canny business practice. There'd be no joke here if Outcault couldn't rely on his readers knowing that Palmer Cox had copyrighted his Brownies and was zealous in pursuing his creator's rights.

The Yellow Kid stands at the threshold of comic strip history not so much because he was the first newspaper comic character (he wasn't) or the first character to appear in "strip" form (he wasn't) but because he demonstrated the enormous potential of newspaper cartoon features. He was, as I said, a combatant in the circulation war between Hearst and Pulitzer, and he was a significant enough figure in the fight to be courted by both publishers. His significance is further attested to by his name being appropriated to describe the sensational journalistic techniques practiced at the *Journal* and the *World* —"yellow journalism." And, finally, the widespread merchandising of the character showed newspaper publishers just how potent an economic force a popular newspaper comic character could be. Without such a creation as the Yellow Kid, it can be supposed that newspapers would have taken somewhat longer to install comics as regular features. But it was Palmer Cox, more than the Yellow Kid and Outcault, who demonstrated the merchandising prowess of a pen-and-ink creation and, thereby, the importance of copyrighting one's characters.

Palmer Cox.
Brownieland.

Cox had moved to New York in October 1875 at the age of 35 to launch himself into a career as an artist and writer. He began as a cartoonist. His earliest work in the city appeared in the *Daily Graphic*, one of the first newspapers to regularly use illustrations, including cartoons. Cox's first published work there was a comic strip. Cox also contributed to *Wild Oats*, one of several humorous weekly magazines then on the newsstands. His first work

for it appeared December 15, 1875, and a week later, the magazine published a 12-panel, two page comic strip by Cox. (All of which merely demonstrates that the comic "strip" form was fairly commonplace by 1875.)

In 1876, Cox arranged for the publication of a booklet, self-covered, of humorous sequential drawings entitled *Hans von Pelter's Trip to Gotham in Pen and Pencil*. The next year, Cox produced a similar booklet, *How Columbus Found America*, consisting of 64 drawings at the rate of two per page. In short, the prototypical comic book.

By the end of the decade, Cox was writing and drawing stories for children that were published in *Harper's Young People*, *Wide Awake*, and *St. Nicholas* magazines. And in the fall of 1882, he produced the first of a series with which his name would be linked for posterity, "The Brownies' Ride," in *St. Nicholas*. Three drawings depicting diminutive bug-eyed elfin characters with large heads were accompanied by rhyming text, the combination detailing the adventure of the Brownie band in borrowing a farmer's horse for a night and returning her by sunrise. Cox's fortune was about to be made.

Cox also operated his own advertising agency, and once the Brownies proved their popularity, he employed them as shills for his clients' products. The Brownies sold Ivory Soap for Proctor & Gamble in more than forty ads that ran from 1883 to 1886, a period coinciding with Ivory Soap's emerging dominance in the domestic soap market.

According to an unpublished article by Wayne Morgan, "Cox exercised full control over his creations. Although he could not copyright the word 'Brownie' since it was deemed to be in common usage, he consciously took full advantage of whatever protection existing legislation could afford his texts and images." In short, he copyrighted every publication of his creations—much in the fashion of a newspaper or magazine.

"When copyright law became more inclusive in 1891, Cox immediately applied for a copyright and patent for twelve Brownie characters (awarded January 15, 1892)," Morgan observes. "By this time, Cox had done comic strips and comic books, developed continuing characters in printed media, placed them in advertising, and was well on his way to developing licensing and merchandising." Dolls and other toys soon followed.

"Most significantly, Cox's success in owning his characters set the pattern for comic artists and children's writers thereafter. He developed licensing and merchandising, two forms of commerce most associated with comics."

And Outcault and his readers were obviously familiar with Cox's success. And other cartoonists were, too. Trying to secure ownership of one's creation was not as unusual an occurrence as we might suppose. Rube Goldberg, for example, managed to own his characters and titles—*Foolish Questions*, *The Look-a-Like Boys* (which had a second life as *Mike and Ike, They Look Alike*, a title that became a catch phrase), *I'm the Guy*, *Boob McNutt*, and a host of others. Throughout his career, beginning in 1907, Rube's shrewd father Max negotiated contracts for him in which his work was merely licensed to syndicates and newspapers. And it is more than likely that Goldberg was not alone in this.

Although creators owning their creations seems to be a recent phenomenon, it's pretty clear that creator's rights were on the minds of many pioneering cartoonists. So why weren't more cartoonists successful in owning their own work? Why does that seem so unusual?

Probably because, as things worked out, creator ownership became increasingly harder to secure. In newspapering, as syndicates emerged in the teens and twenties, offering huge monetary rewards to those who signed with them, cartoonists chose big bucks rather than ownership. Syndicates retained ownership in order to protect their investment: if a cartoonist became too ill to work or died, the syndicate could hire someone else to continue the strip—without having to bother about royalty problems. Publishers of comic books (which began by reprinting newspaper strips) followed suit.

In any event, the emergence in the closing decade of the last century (that is, the 20th) of creator ownership marks perhaps the final phase in an effort that was too soon abandoned in the infancy of the medium.

And next time, if the little green light keeps glowing in the digital appliance over the keyboard and my dancing fingers don't pick up that option to join the Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall, we'll take a look at the oldest continually running comic character in American newspaper cartooning. Stay 'tooned.

(Left) The Uncle Sam Brownie and the Chinese Brownie, two of the more individualized Brownie characters that Cox secured copyrights (or patents?) for, (right) miscellaneous brownies

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

By J.C. Vaughn, Executive Editor

If you've been lamenting the absence of old fashioned dash and daring in today's comics, look no further than *Rob Hanes Adventures*. Writer-artist Randy Reynaldo debuted the title character in his previous series, *Adventure Strip Digest*, several years ago. Now Rob Hanes has returned in a new series.

He's an action-minded young hero who travels the globe in a series of thrilling and compelling adventures seemingly straight out of a Milton Caniff mold. If you haven't seen this small press publication at your local retailer, you might very well need to ask for it to be ordered. Diamond product codes and Randy's website address appear at the end of this interview.

ROB HANES ADVENTURES
an interview with Randy Reynaldo

Comic Book Marketplace: What's your background as an artist?

RANDY REYNALDO: I'm completely self-taught.

CBM: What were the first comics you got into?

REYNALDO: I have very early memories of being enthralled by *Peanuts* paperbacks, *Dennis the Menace* comic books, and some super-hero comics. But the comic book that I started following on a regular basis was DC's *Sgt. Rock* (then known as *Our Army at War*), beginning around issue 265. These inspired me to do my own "self-made" comics that were basically rip-offs of these World War II comics. My imprint was the "War Comics Group" (which is where my company name, "WCG Comics" comes from) and the lead character was "Sgt. Hanes and Hell Platoon" (which is where the name "Hanes" comes from). The other comic-book character I began following regularly was Batman through his own title and through *Detective Comics*.

What probably made me a bit different than your typical comic-book fan was that I was also very much into adventure strips, particularly Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*. This was in the mid- to late-1970s, way before the full run was published during the '80s. I only knew about *Terry*, and Caniff's other strip, *Steve Canyon*, through the history books on comics that I used to check out regularly from my local library, and scour libraries and bookstores for. These books usually only offered snippets—perhaps only a daily strip or even a panel—but for some reason the art and the implied storyline really enthralled me. I think I just responded to what seemed to me to be fairly sophisticated writing and drawing.

CBM: Did you have aspirations to work on the standard super-hero titles or did you always want to do your own characters?

REYNALDO: For some reason, I was never interested in drawing super-heroes as a career. I did do some of my super-hero characters when I was doing my self-made comics in the '70s, and did some "crossovers" between my characters and established characters like Batman, but they were just for fun. I did seriously try to develop a daily adventure strip during this time—that's where Rob Hanes came from— but this was long after the adventure strip had become no longer viable as a genre. When self-published and independent comics began emerging, that really piqued my interest. Since I did a lot of "home-made" comics, I think the idea of being a publisher appealed to me as much as did being a cartoonist. Not so much to publish other people's characters, but more to be involved in the entire production of a comic book.

CBM: What kind of reactions did you get when you first started publishing *Adventure Strip Digest*?

SUNDAY OCTOBER 28

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STERANKO

George Perez
Adam Hughes
Matt Wagner
Michael Avon Oeming
Murphy Anderson
Gray Morrow
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REYNALDO: Actually, great. I actually began publishing it as a digest-sized, small press fanzine (hence the word "Digest" in the title), and I was surprised at the word of mouth that it built. At the risk of being immodest, it probably helped that my work was a lot slicker and mainstream than what one usually finds in the fanzine community. What also helped was that I consciously mailed the book to a lot of comics pros and media types. Over the years, industry pros have been a solid source of readership and support for my work. A lot of that stems, I think, from the fact that they are knowledgeable of the tradition I'm working in, even more so than many comics fans. Many pros have told me that if they had the freedom, they'd like to be doing an adventure book, too!

CBM: What were your early influences?

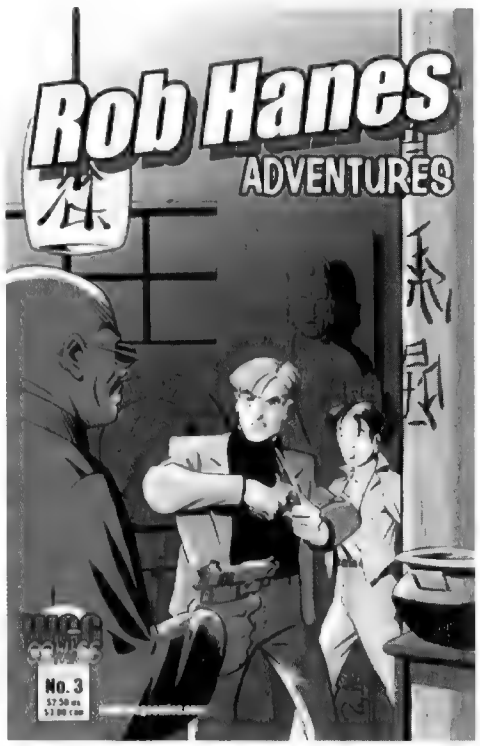
REYNALDO: It's no secret who the big kahuna was for me early on—Milton Caniff. But during my obsession with Sgt. Rock, I also learned from the work of Joe Kubert, George Evans, Russ Heath, and John Severin. I have such a vivid memory of seeing those first ads for the Kubert School of Cartooning come out! I fell out of comics for a while, but what got me back into comics was *Micronauts* by Bill Mantlo and Mike Golden. I don't think it stands up as well now, but at the time, I was blown away by the first 12 issues of that initial story arc. About that time, I also discovered Will Eisner's *Spirit* through the Warren reprints. Those are still inspirations. I recalled being also impressed by Marshall Rogers' stint on *Batman*. In college, Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg* really captured my imagination. It was during this time (we're in the 1980s now) that the full work of Caniff's run on *Terry and the Pirates* was published. I also discovered Roy Crane (*Wash Tubbs* and *Buz Sawyer*) and Alex Toth during this time. In many ways, I have come to appreciate Crane and Toth even more than Caniff, at least aesthetically. But Caniff's writing is what elevated his art to a different level.

CBM: What influences you now?

REYNALDO: There's so much good stuff right now and like a lot of pros, I don't have time to read everything! Surprisingly, like a lot of people, *Danger Girl* really excited me (not for the obvious reasons!). In some ways, that strip did some of the things I wanted to do with my own book, but a lot better. I like *Batman Adventures* for its simplicity. But I must admit, there's not a lot of series that I've really latched onto.

CBM: How has the reaction been since you returned?

REYNALDO: It could always be better, but response has been good overall. Sales were almost exactly what I estimated they would be. The new series has led to a flurry of back orders for the earlier work from the series and more re-orders for *Rob Hanes Adventures* #1. Those are all good signs. Actually, *Rob Hanes Adventures* #1 is pretty much my best selling issue since I began self-publishing. It's nice to see a lot of people remember the book, and there's been a core group of readers who have remained devoted and patient. But obviously, I need to reach out further. Diamond Comic Distributors has been very kind to me, giving me some nice little plugs. I'm doing more advertising than I've ever done before, through direct mail, online and in print. Nothing extravagantly expensive, but just enough to be seen out there on a regular basis and to let people know I'm back. Ads work best in building awareness over time—a one-shot usually doesn't have much impact on sales. The best advertising, of course, is to just keep publishing. When I was publishing *Adventure Strip Digest*, I had an interesting experience in that my sales crept up every issue. I had the usual drop-off after issue 2, of course, but



after that my sales started going up again. That's unique in that most publishers see a steady decline or leveling off. I like to think that this was because of the quality of work and word of mouth (and not just because "up" was the only place I had to go).

CBM: What are your long-term goals in comics?

REYNALDO: Pretty modest—to get more issues of *Rob Hanes Adventures* out there, and perhaps be a footnote in the history of comics. It's always been a dream to publish several books under the WCG Comics imprint and to build a personality from it in the same way Marvel and DC did back in the '60s and '70s, but mostly that's just daydreaming. A few nights ago, I heard a wonderful quote from another cartoonist—comics are one of the last genres that allows authors and artists to be fairly close to its audience. I think that's very true. I'm just very happy to be publishing again and to have people be interested in what I'm doing.

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Collectable Character Statues

by Mike Wilbur

Classic Comic Characters from Dark Horse

In late 1999, **Dark Horse Comics** launched a bold experiment, with the introduction of their line of **Classic Comic Characters** statues. Inspired by, and modeled after, the Syroco statues of the 1940s, the series likewise featured characters from classic newspaper strips.

The road from inception of the project to the first much-delayed release was a torturous and frustrating one for both Dark Horse and anxious fans, but the end result was very much worth the wait. (An in-depth interview with Dark Horse Product Development Vice President **David Scroggy**, elaborating on the subject of the Classic Comic Character statues, will appear in *CBM* #88.)

The first release in the series, **George Herriman's Krazy Kat**, was solicited to retailers in the October 1999 issue of Diamond Comic Distributors' *Previews* catalog, for a projected release date of January 5, 2000. One new statue was solicited each month; a monthly release schedule was planned. An assortment of production, approval, and packaging problems caused such delays that ten statues had been solicited before the first arrived in the stores. However, once the logjam had been broken, the releases were accelerated to bi-weekly until production and release schedule were back in sync.

The finished products are phenomenal, from the attention to detail on the figures themselves, to the exceptionally well-designed and executed packaging. The non-statue components accompanying each character are works of art in-and-of themselves. The well-crafted and illustrated tins are packed with laser-cut charcoal-colored foam, which cushions the two-piece clear plastic shell encasing and protecting each statue. The underside of the lid holds a 1" pinback of the character and a small B&W illustrated booklet about the character and his/her creator.

The figures are uncannily accurate simulations of original 1940s **Syroco** figures. Averaging about 4" in height, they have the look and feel of the classic pieces that inspired their creation. The material used in the manufacture of the line, a cast synthetic polyresin, is more modern than the press-molded sawdust and resin mixture used to manufacture the originals, but the result is virtually indistinguishable.

So far, 23 of the Classic Comic Characters series have been released. More are in the pipeline, for what Dark Horse envisions as an ongoing, rather than close-ended program.

To date, we've seen Herriman's Krazy Kat, along with nemesis **Ignatz Mouse**; E.C. Segar's **Popeye**, **Olive Oyl**, **Wimpy**, and **Bluto**; Al Capp's **Li'l Abner**, **Daisy Mae** and **Fearless Fosdick**; Chic Young's **Blondie** and **Dagwood**; Lee Falk's **Phantom** and **Mandrake the Magician**; Mort Walker's **Beetle Bailey** and **Sarge**; Milton Caniff's **Terry** and **The Dragon Lady**; Hal Foster's **Prince Valiant**; Alex Raymond's **Flash Gordon**; Pat Sullivan's **Felix the Cat**; Chester Gould's **Dick Tracy**; Bill Holman's **Smokey Stover**; and Harold Gray's **Little Orphan Annie**.

It's a bit tough trying to pick a favorite out of the bunch. They're all really cool pieces, and each has some characteristic that really makes it stand out. For some it's a defining physical characteristic; for others it's a more abstract connection.

Dagwood is flat out hilarious in his bare feet and pajamas, carrying his towering namesake sandwich in his hand.

Then again, I really like the Phantom because I've avidly followed his adventures for as long as I've been reading newspaper comics. But then, there's the voluptuous backwoods pulchritude of Daisy Mae. Of course, there's also Smokey Stover, who introduced me, at a very early age, to the world of verbal and visual puns and non-sequiters, helping inspire my lifelong fascination with language, and the magical things it could do. The incredibly intricate dragon painted on the back of the Dragon Lady's coat. The amusing juxtaposition of Dick Tracy and his bumbling parody Fearless Fosdick.

I could go on and on extolling the virtues of every one of these impressive little masterpieces, but the best recommendation is to see them for yourself. In person. Pictures are great, but they don't do these babies justice.

Edition size went through some course corrections for the first several releases, starting at 550 for the first three, bumping up to 750 for the next four, and 950 for releases eight through seventeen. But they've now, beginning with the 18th release, settled into runs of 600 for the foreseeable future.

Original retail price for all pieces in the series is $49.95, a true bargain in today's collectible market when you consider what you're getting for your money. Secondary market pricing varies widely by character. The Phantom brings higher prices, for example, because the entire production run only filled half of the unexpectedly heavy advance orders. Many of the mid-period high production-run pieces, and some later issues, still sell for SRP, because they are not sold out and are still available through the primary distribution network.

In any case, it's hard to go wrong with any of the Classic Comic Characters. Between the reasonable price and the low production runs, it's a no-lose proposition.

DC Direct Gets into the Spirit

The statue just oozed **Eisner**, from the tip of its blue fedora to the bottom of its 3-D logo base. Fists clenched and face set with grim determination, **The Spirit** seemed poised to leap from the shelf and to the rescue. Evildoers beware! After nearly 61 years of existence, Will Eisner's legendary hero had finally been immortalized in three dimensions with the March 21, 2001 release of DC Direct's cold-cast porcelain statue.

When the publishing deal between DC Comics and Will Eisner was announced at Comicon International at San Diego in August 1999, the prospect of non-print product releases was not discussed. So, when the prototype of the Spirit statue was quietly put on display at the DC booth in San Diego the following summer, it came as quite an exciting surprise.

Impressive and powerful, the Spirit statue was sculpted from Eisner's designs by **William Paquet**. Maybe he was inspired by the subject matter, but, with this release, Paquet has quite possibly produced his best work during his time as one of DC Direct's regular sculptors. (Ironically, Paquet is also responsible for what is commonly regarded as one of the worst-sculpted DC statues of all time, the Hal Jordan Green Lantern. But that's a tale for another day.) The Spirit was offered in a very-limited edition of 1,000.

By the way, next issue's "New & Noteworthy" column will feature a look at the Spirit action figure from **Graphitti Designs** and other assorted comic character figures. Don't miss it! And The Spirit isn't the only Golden Age character to be recently revived in three dimensions.

In 1999, DC Direct released the **Golden Age Flash** medium statue. Designed by artist **Steve Rude** and sculpted by Paquet, the original Flash, Jay Garrick, is posed in mid-stride on a deco-styled base. Sized somewhat smaller than the standard 1:8 scale full-size statues, the Golden Age Flash medium statue was issued in a limited edition of 1,600.

GOLDEN AGE STATUES

The **Alan Scott Green Lantern** statue, also released in 1999, was the final component of a set featuring three generations of Green Lanterns. As with the Golden Age Flash statue, GL Alan Scott was designed by Rude and sculpted by Paquet. Ring-hand aimed skyward, and cape billowing around him, the figure of Scott rises dramatically above his successors, Silver Age GL Hal Jordan and current GL Kyle Rayner. Alan Scott was produced in a limited edition of 2,000.

A year after the release of the full-size Golden Age Green Lantern statue, all three GL statues were reproduced in miniature form, thus treating us to another Golden Age piece with the new Alan Scott version. This mini-statue was limited to 2,300 pieces.

The latest Golden Age issue is the July '01 release of the Alan Scott GL mini-bust, which incorporates a display of a life-size prop Power Ring. An upcoming column will feature an in-depth look at the wide variety of Green Lantern items produced by DC Direct. Not that DC Direct is the only one to feature statues of Golden Age characters (pretty darn close, though!).

Also in 1999 (in retrospect, quite an active year for the old-timers!), **Bowen Designs** released the **Captain America Golden Age** statue. Garbed in the original version of his costume, and carrying his original triangular shield (both of which appeared ONLY in Captain America #1, from March 1941), Cap stands proudly and inspiringly atop a deco-styled base. Sculpted by Randy Bowen, the Golden Age Captain America was offered in a limited edition of 2,000.

And the flow of new statues of Golden Age characters does not end there. January 2002 will see the beginning of an ongoing series of mini-busts from **DC Direct**. First up will be a rendition of the original Man of Steel in the **Classic Superman Mini-Bust**.

According to the *Previews* solicitation, "The first series of mini-busts will feature DC's classic characters, beginning with...a classic retro-style Superman..." The Classic Superman Mini-Bust is scheduled for a mid-January release, with the Classic Batman Mini-Bust following in mid-March. Also, scheduled for late March, in DC Direct's line of props, is a full-size replica of Golden Age Green Lantern Alan Scott's power battery.

So don't listen to anyone who proclaims the demise of the Golden Age. The Golden Age isn't dead. It's just getting its second wind!

Advisors Wanted!

Are you a retailer selling large quantities of statues and other high-end comics-related collectibles? We can use your expertise and market familiarity to assist in the production of a monthly market report for these items.

As you are aware, spikes and spots on eBay do not necessarily reflect the day-to-day reality of secondary market sales of character statues.

What we would like, from those retailers interested in joining the team, is a monthly view of the market from your perspective. What's hot and what's not, to use the cliche. What were your Top 5 preorders for the month? What were your Top 5 selling in-stock items? What items couldn't you give away? What items were people looking for that were unavailable? Any noteworthy individual sales?

Submission deadline is the 10th of each month.

Email submissions to: wmike@gemstonepub.com

Regular mail submissions to:
Mike Wilbur
c/o Gemstone Publishing
1966 Greenspring Drive, Suite LL-4
Timonium, MD 21093

The Michael Naiman Report

Look Before You Leap!

Looks as if CGC is doing such a good job in their restoration detection that many people are being unhappily informed that their submitted books have been—gasp!—choke!—gag!—RESTORED! There have recently been occurrences where collectors are attempting to go back to the people from whom they purchased these books many years ago and now they're requesting/demanding that they get their money refunded. Hello? It's been waaaay too long for that to happen. Sure, 30-60-90 days is an appropriate time to ask for a refund. But come on now! Why didn't the purchaser do their "due diligence" when they bought the book in the first place. In the cases I am familiar with, the sellers were unaware of any color touch or restoration. The next thing we might see at large conventions are buyers walking around with hand-held battery-operated black lights to detect color touch! They cost under $10, might be a good investment! The CGC Census has prompted a few dealers to ballyhoo their ownership of "the highest grade (name your comic or issue here) in existence!" Collectors should realize that many (if not most) very high-grade books still remain in hobbyists' closets and boxes and have not been graded by the service. Be careful of the hyperbole.

Slabbed Sighting: Why would someone list a slabbed 9.6 copy of Walt Disney's Comics and Stories #601 (Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide-ed at $6 in NM) for $14.99 on eBay when it costs $25 to get it encased and graded? A dealer I spoke to also saw this listing and commented that "...it is the inevitable progression of gullibility and ignorance that could bury our hobby."

A few calls have come in regarding my roundabout description of a notorious dealer in New York who is back in business selling phony Marvel "File Copies" along with trimmed and color touched books. EBay appears to be powerless when it comes to any type of enforcement. And when the seller has private sales and private feedback, how do you contact others who have been duped? How do you check? My suggestion is to call a few dealers who have been around for more than ten years. They'll know exactly whom I'm talking about. It's a shame to see new Internet collectors get burned. We as a hobby cannot afford to lose any participants.

Items to watch: Yes, we know that the Spidey movie is coming, but the AS-M title appears to not only be holding it's own, but ripe for another bounce upwards on selected issues. There is still plenty of room to move (in high grade) for the Green Goblin issues #14, #121 and #122. On another front, The-Not-Near-Mint-Enough-Crowd is still looking for (and buying) copies of Ghost Rider #1 (1973), Marvel Premiere #5, #6 and #7, as well as Iron Fist #14. Iron Man #55 (Thanos cameo) is still a deal. All of these are reasonably priced in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. Looking at DC, the first Darkseid in Jimmy Olsen #134 is in demand (in high grade) as well as Bolland covers on Wonder Woman. Lois Lane is in a coma, so she should be an easy pickup for completists and high-grade collectors. Tough to overlook the clean Schaffenberger artwork.

Bound to be Bagged: Another variation on the collection front is the quest for those oddball groups of what have affectionately become known as "bagged or pre-packaged comics." Those are the discounted items that were found in specialty stores and drugstores starting in 1967. Top Comics' (the Godfather of Bagged Books) appearance in 1967 heralded the beginning of this phenomenon. Consisting of reprinted comics, Top repackaged Disney, Hanna-Barbera, Movie Comics as well as some Warner Brothers and Walter Lantz titles.

In later years, Whitman (repackaging both DC and Marvel under the Whitman imprint), King and Charlton also looked to repackage their books in this fashion. Today they are looked upon as one of those anomalies of the hobby. Typically they can be purchased in online auctions in two-, three- and four-packs ranging in price from $15 to $40. The story is told that the legendary Uncle Scrooge #179 was only distributed in a three-pack. The real scoop is that ALL Whitman's were distributed in three-packs from December of 1971 until late 1979! If this book was ever found still in its original unopened bag, there's no telling what astronomical price it would sell for! The Holy Grails of the Whitman reprint series are Uncle Scrooge #179, WDC&S #480 and Donald Duck #222. I have seen a bagged set of these three, however the numbering was off by one issue: U$ #178, WDC&S #479 and DD #221! Can you imagine what a pre-pack of these would bring if they were found all together?

As longtime comic-book researcher Jon McClure noted, "These books were condemned to death by the very nature in which they were packaged." Made of very inexpensive plastic, these bags soon became discolored and brittle. I'm always looking for more info on these bagged beauties...email me and we'll share data *[see also McClure's two-part Whitman article in this issue and last issue].*

There appears to be a real avalanche of auctions available for the consumer in the next few months. All Star Auctions, Greg Manning, Heritage and Mastronet, Inc., are all queuing up to offer the marketplace a selection of art and comics. One has to wonder exactly how much can be absorbed within such a short time frame. Will we see new players? Will there be a shift in the purchaser demographics? Time will tell!

CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Adv. Of Bob Hope
#8 VG $40 50%
#10 VG+ $50 63%
#11 VG $25 53%
#13 FN $46 65%
#22 VG $16 50%
#28 VG+ $15 47%
#30 FN+ $25 52%

All Top
#12 FN $290 92%

All-Select
#1 VG $2,000 1.08X

Aquaman
#18 FN $22 81%

Archie's Pal, Jughead
#1 VF $511 65%

Amazing Spider-Man
#1 VG $1,850 1.16X
#2 FN $950 1.33X
#100 NM $200 90%
#122 NM $200 1.21X
#129 VF- $90 74%
#289 MT $20 1.11X

Avengers
#1 FN $550 86%
#1 GD $228 1.07X
#1 VG $197 46%
#1 GD $177 83%
#2 FN $148 92%
#4 FN $400 93%
#4 VG $152 53%
#100 NM $125 1.5X

Batman
#17 GD $125 63%
#27 VG+ $300 77%
#85 FN $199 1.16X
#61 FN- $167 66%

Batman Annual
#6 VF $95 1.38X

Blackhawk
#20 FN++ $93 53%
#55 GD $49 1.83X
#68 GD $41 1.71X
#107 VG $43 1.21X

Brave and Bold
#28 GD $107 30%
#29 VG $128 40%
#50 VF $66 55%
#51 FN $35 51%
#73 FN $7 73%

Daredevil
#1 FN $350 76%
#1 VG $237 77%
#17 VG $12 63%
#49 VF $12 71%
#158 VF $39 1.53X
#159 VF $12 76%
#160 VF $6 61%

Detective
#21 FR $227 Guide
#37 FR $413 1.4X
#244 VG $76 1.22X
#253 FN $90 1.45X
#255 FN $57 91%

Dollman
#18 VG $45 54%
#18 FN $160 1.28X

Donald Duck
#222 FN+ $40 1.47X
#222 FN $38 1.40X

Fantastic Four
#1 GD $638 80%
#1 FN $405 17%
#2 GD $404 1.54X
#4 VG $478 1.12X
#5 GD $160 73%
#10 VF $1,800 3.08X
#15 FN- $275 3.125X
#18 FN+ $80 91%
#50 GD $23 84%
#52 VG $19 71%
#55 GD $12 1.33X

Fight
#44 VF- $51 40%

Flash (GA)
#74 VF $405 88%
#89 VF $1,065 1.08X

Heroic
#4 FN++ $80 54%

Hulk
#105 VF $19 46%
#181 VF $450 82%

Journey into Mystery
#83 GD $280 86%
#83 GD $236 73%
#83 GD $200 62%
#84 VG+ $204 1.21X
#84 VG $128 76%
#85 VF $482 1.05X
#99 GD $10 74%

Justice League of America
#1 GD $248 94%
#2 FN $202 1.11X
#4 FN $84 75%
#7 FN $81 99%
#9 VF+ $275 93%

Katy Keene
#22 FN $36 60%
#37 FN $48 80%
#38 FN $27 45%
#41 FN $32 65%

Mickey Mouse
#208 FN $31 2.52X

Modern
#78 VG+ $47 67%

National
#45 VG $29 64%
#50 VF+ $91 73%
#74 FR $33 6.28X

Our Army at War
#83 VG $150 58%
#90 VG+ $115 1.92X
#97 VG+ $80 2.58X
#98 VF $98 91%
#100 VG $100 3.05X

Phantom Stranger
#1 FN $23 85%
#18 NM- $41 1.64X

Police
#14 FN- $178 64%
#42 GD+ $42 1.05X
#53 VG $40 59%
#87 VG $43 86%

Prize
#15 VG+ $123 98%
#52 VF $104 1.44X

Punch
#10 VG+ $115 95%
#13 VG $100 82%
#20 FN $270 95%

Sensation
#4 VG+ $430 1.20X
#35 VF $400 1.33X
#57 FN $51 43%
#64 VG $88 1.1X
#70 FN- $49 41%

Sgt. Fury
#1 VF $224 26%
#12 VF $50 1.12X
#14 VF $50 1.12X
#18 VF $50 1.12X

Spy Fighters
#1 VG $45 95%
#10 VG $15 68%

Sub-Mariner (GA)
#7 FR $106 50%
#20 FN+ $495 1.3X
#38 VG $150 92%

Sub-Mariner (SA)
#8 VF $23 90%

Superman
#1 AppVF (heavy rest) $13,000 14%
#3 FN $2,100 Guide
#4 VG+ $495 47%
#12 VG+ $275 65%
#16 FN $285 56%
#17 FN- $565 81%

Uncle Scrooge
#1 (FC 386) VF $666 97%
#5 FN $100 1.25X
#7 VG $31 84%
#19 GD $20 1.43X
#38 VG $43 2.23X
#179 VG $216 2.9X

Wonder Woman
#22 GD $44 52%
#29 GD $25 30%
#31 VG $46 40%
#37 VG+ $65 56%

Worlds Best
#1 GD $1,700 1.25X

Worlds Finest
#13 VF $350 41%
#19 VF $650 90%
#53 GD $56 Guide
#68 VG+ $86 78%
#75 VG $68 77%

X-Men
#1 VG $750 67%
#1 FN $1,700 1.01X
#6 NM $800 2.13X
#23 NM $265 2.12X
#94 VG $130 1.20X

Young Men
#24 VG $450 82%
#25 VG+ $234 1.11X

MARKET REPORTS

MICHAEL TIERNEY

Collector's Edition
North Little Rock, AR 72116
The Comic Book Store
Little Rock, AR 72227

The summer season of 2001 showed the early signs of revitalization for new comics in the marketplace, which always translates into sales for older comics. But there is one disturbing **new trend** that has popped up.

Over the years, the occasional ex-wife or ex-girlfriend has lugged in the remainders of **abandoned collections**. Invariably there was always a reason that these comics were left behind. One collection from a particularly nasty divorce still contained 'wife-swapping' magazines buried in it. Gee, I wonder what happened to that relationship? My advice to any spouses faced with this situation? Buy a price guide before you settle! You'll probably find out that the guide cost more than what the collection is worth.

In the world of comics with REAL value, **DC Comics** keeps rolling along.

Examples of recent sales are: Batman #171 (1st Silver Age Riddler appearance) GD $24.75, #200 (CGC Grade 5.0) $40, #212 VF $17; Detective Comics #377 (Riddler) VF $17; Justice League of America #9 (1st Origin) GD $34.50, #22 (Crisis on Earth 2) GD $30, and #94 (Reprints 1st Sandman & Origin/1st Starman) VF $29.

Demand for **Marvel Comics**, once the behemoth of back issue sales, remained slow despite anticipation for the upcoming Spider-Man movie. A gentleman who read a newspaper article about the Wild Stars comic I am publishing came in with a grocery sack of comics that had been sitting in his attic since he was a child. The unbagged comics that were haphazardly sacked included most of the **run of Amazing Spider-Man** #1 through #104, including multiple copies of all the early Green Goblin stories and others. There was even an Avengers #1.

The seller was thrilled to learn how valuable his collection was, despite the lower grade condition of the earlier comics.

Some of the Amazing Spider-Man issues that have **sold** are: #1 GD $325, #13 (1st Mysterio) VG $73, #17 (2nd Green Goblin) VG $64, #18 (1st Ned Leeds) Fair $17.50, #33 VG+ $35, #53 GD $9, #58 GD- $5, and #72 VG+ $9.

I've split the collection between my store locations, and while they do draw looks, activity has been slow. I'm still not close to the break-even point. In years past I've moved collections like this in a matter of days.

Maybe, as the Spider-Man movie draws closer...

GARY DOLGOFF

Gary Dolgoff Comics
116 Pleasant St
Easthampton, MA 01027
413-529-0326
gdcomics@javanet.com

This year, I had no table at the San Diego show, however, I walked around interacting with dealers, and some collectors. I saw that 'table stock' seemed to be selling well and one dealer was selling large handfulls of cheap **Classics** ($3-$4; sometimes a bit more). Others were selling medium to high grade mid to late 60s Marvels. A fellow with Dark Horse Trade Paperbacks was 'moving out'...(I was happy to hear that as well as I am 'offering out' a wholesale stock of these myself).

I feel it is a sign of potential 'good market health'—when these **'blue collar books'** move out; it means that comicdom in general is buying. An exhibition that showed a retrospective of creators (both old, and some newer) complete with a good picture of the creator, a 'bio', etc.—was actually touching, even to these 'long-term' eyes.

It was also pleasant to see that the collectors weren't being such 'hagglers,' as we dealers must sometimes endure—at some shows. In general, I have the highest regard for our 'collecting public;' however, at some shows, the collectors attempt to unreasonably **'haggle'** on items that dealers would gladly buy at the same price!. I always say if you don't like the price or the grading, then INDEED 'bargain'—but c'mon, collectors, if the price is 'definitely decent' then give the dealers a break, instead of arguing BUY IT from the 'fair-priced fella' and THANK HIM for a 'worthwhile deal!'

Anyway, I will have a table at next years' San Diego show (as well as the October Boston show this year, and the November Big Apple show). Maybe I'll see y'all there!

NICK BECKETT

Uncle S.A.M. Comics, in association with Chaos City Comics
20 Heritage Close
St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL3 4EB
United Kingdom - 01727/838719)
gwentleaf@aol.com

Well, this one's going to be easy. Market report for the last month? Spidey. Spidey, Spidey, Spidey, Spidey, Spidey, Spidey, Spidey, Spidey. Get the idea?

Yup, the **Spider-Man movie** frenzy is building and pretty much any issue below #200, in pretty much any grade, is shifting. In the UK, lower grade stuff, from FN to VF-, is moving at Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide and, as for the high grade stuff? If it can be found in the first place, there is no resistance for 1.5 to 2 times Overstreet Guide, depending upon the importance of the issue. **Goblin** appearances are highest priority on most wants lists, with #14 the key, but everything up to #122 seeing 'amazing' levels of activity. Another book that's rocketing skywards is #129. It's Spidey, it's the first Punisher (after many years of lethargy, that phrase actually means something again), it was never distributed on these shores (a long story which I won't bore you with this time), so you can throw your Overstreet Guide out. If the trend on this comic book continues, it will soon be right up there with The Hulk #181 and Giant-Size X-Men #1.

At this point, I also have to eat humble pie. Remember last report? Few examples of multiples of Overstreet Guide? No CGC market? Me and my big mouth. We've just put together a large deal for one very affluent buyer. The instruction was simple—find Spideys below #100, CGC graded, minimum 9.0 and to hell with the cost!

Result? Approximately 30 slabbed books, ranging from 9.0 to 9.6, Overstreet Guide value somewhere in the region of $8,000, retail sale (including a finders fee) just over $16,000.

So, has anything else been selling other than Spidey? Well, yes, but with so much money being hurled at the AS-Ms, not in any great quantities. **Golden Age** is slow. There are few GA collectors in the UK (you could probably memorize all their phone numbers in the time it takes to read this report) and most are content with what they have. They'll consider most things of note that turn up, but none of them seem hell-bent on filling complete runs for the sake of it. DC is slow, with a few exceptions here and there. Batman still moves with **Neal Adams'** stuff in particular commanding keen prices. Adams interior art is popular, and issues with his cover art also garner interest. Marvel is solid and steady, but some titles remain on the list for burial. We actually sold a NM- copy of Captain America #103 and didn't know whether to celebrate or cry. It had been with us for so long, it felt like losing one of the family.

Finally, some silly Spidey prices for those of you who already have complete runs to chuckle over: Amazing Spider-Man #14 VF $1950, #47 VF+ $170, #50 VF+ (CGC) $640, #51 VF $210, #129 FN/VF $180.

And finally, the shining star in a firmament of insanity...Amazing Spider-Man #87 NM+ (CGC) $800

With this sort of madness around, maybe next time I'll be able to report that we actually sold an issue of Tales Of Suspense? Nah, that'd be stretching it just a little too far!

STEVE FISHLER
VINCENT ZURZOLO, JR.

Metropolis Collectibles
873 Broadway Suite 201
New York, NY 10003
1-800-229-6387
buying@metropoliscomics.com

In terms of sales, finding new customers and buying new material the San Diego Convention was a successful one. I sold many low, mid and high-grade comics. I was particularly impressed with the interest collectors had in low grade **Marvel Silver Age keys**. Usually at shows people are looking for high grade. The "What ya got in Mint?" guys seemed to have stayed home this year, or at least far away from my booth. Don't get me wrong, people bought high-grade books from me but they were not the guys who only buy in Near Mint or better, which grows very tiresome while I am at a show. I am of the opinion that a collector should look at a comic and judge for him/herself rather than rely solely on a label from a dealer or a third party grading service.

It troubles me to watch as collectors pass over VF+, VF/NM or NM- books without even looking at them. First off, dealers make mistakes and can sometimes be too harsh on a book, secondly, you should judge for yourself. If you do not know enough to grade the books yourself simply ask a dealer what makes the book you are looking at a VF/NM or NM-. I assisted one gentleman for a half-hour advising him on how to grade his comics—he's now in therapy three times a week—Ha! Seriously, he did a really great job and we matched up on most of his purchases. I was glad to do this because I believe a knowledgeable collector makes the best customer.

The **prices we realized** for comics sold at San Diego were strong. We sold a Detective #31 in Fine+ with moderate restoration for $5,000; Amazing Spider-Man #2 CGC VF/NM Northland Copy for $4,800; Famous Funnies #212 CGC VF double cover for $1,350; Four Color #9 VG/FN $1,700; Amazing Fantasy GD- $900; Superman #3 F/VF writing fc $2900; Classic Comics #5 FN+ $550; and Hit Comics #5 FN with moderate restoration for $1,450.

This year's AACC seminar on grading was quite the spectacle. **Gary Carter** (former editor of CBM), Mike Dalessandro, (collector), Steve Borock (CGC head grader), Rob Roter (PCE) and I sat on a panel to voice our opinions on grading and stuff. I am not sure what exactly came of it and I wonder if anybody left knowing how to grade any better. Next year I would suggest a longer period of audience questions and a limit of one-minute answers—anybody who attended will know to what I am referring. I also think we should pass around a low grade, mid grade and high-grade comic and teach people to grade using real books. I would also request that next year I not be seated next to Steve Borock as he kept touching my leg—just kidding Stevie!

JOHN E. PETTY, DIRECTOR

Heritage Comic Auctions
100 Highland Park Village 2nd Floor
Dallas, TX 75205
214-252-4392
JPetty@HeritageComics.com

Another San Diego Convention has come and gone, and what an overwhelming experience it was. Beautiful weather, an excellent facility (although it needs more ATMs!), and an overall well-run event really made the weekend a pleasure. I think that, for me, the best part of the show was the opportunity to meet people like George Tuska, Gene Colan, Russ Heath, John Romita Sr, Charles Vess, Carmine Infantino, Dave Stevens, Ray Bradbury, and Julie Schwartz, all people whose work has touched me over the years, and find out that not only are they **great creators**, they're also fine, gracious, generous people. That's something that will stay with me much longer than any particular comic or piece of art.

Speaking of original art, that seemed to be THE hot item at the show. Lots of great original art dealers were set up, all with countless original treasures for sale, but even the comic dealers seemed to have art with them, and that appeared to be what people were looking at most intently. As great as the art on the sales floor was, however, the real highlight for me was seeing a couple of original Golden Age **Simon and Kirby** pages at the AACC dinner. As I mentioned last time, more and more people are being attracted to this facet of our hobby. High demand coupled with true scarcity is creating record-breaking prices for original art everywhere one looks. Particularly hot right now is Bronze Age Marvel art. As those of us that grew up in the 1970s start having more and more disposable income, this is the art we're seeking out, and we're willing to pay to get it. This aspect of the market is so explosive, it's difficult even to estimate prices on material from this period. As more and more prime examples of art goes into permanent collections, expect to see prices continue to rise.

The other hot item at San Diego was **CGC graded** books. Whatever your feelings about CGC (and I personally think they're doing a great job), you can't deny the fact that they've had a major impact on our hobby. High grade certified books are selling for amazing prices. The effect of the recently released Silver and Golden Age

population report has yet to be seen, although I suspect that we will see a slowdown in price increases for Modern Age books as people realize just how many SPAWN #1s, for example, have already been slabbed. Another interesting result of CGC grading has been the almost total loss of interest in Restored books. The dreaded "Purple Label" seems to be the kiss of death for most comics, as collectors increasingly turn away from restored examples of comics. However, the low prices of restored comics, might make this a fruitful area for investment in the future. Only time will tell.

A few **auction results** from HeritageComics.com's recent $1 opening/no reserve auctions on eBay: MAD #8 CGC-graded 9.0 realized a strong $1,560, but MAD #19 CGC-graded 9.0 closed at only $400; the art for Fantastic Four #203, page 15, by Keith Pollard sold for $183.50; Amazing Spider-Man #191, page 26, also by Pollard, closed at $340; two pieces of MAD art by George Woodbridge went for $92 and $86.57; Sub-Mariner #30, page 18, with art by Sal Buscema, sold for $78; Weird Science #15 CGC-graded 6.5 went for $196.50; and a restored copy of Panic #1 with a CGC Apparent grade of 4.5 closed at $35.52.

JAMIE NEWBOLD
GINO SIRAGUSE

SoCal Comics
8280 Clairemont Mesa Blvd #124
San Diego, CA 92111
858-715-8669
socalcom@aol.com

Greetings! We're going to cut right to the chase: The newly expanded dealer's room at the San Diego International Comic Con was enormous! We stood at the south end of one of the two, long aisles and looked north to the opposite end of the vast series of connected exhibition halls. Peering through the succession of support arches along the aisle at a distance of about one-quarter mile. We were struck with feeling that we were looking at one of those old infinity covers that used to pop up on comics from time to time. Just a vast, endless view that went on forever!

We enjoyed financial success at the show and decided, based upon our sales, that there are still buyers for just about every comic that exists. We found that attention was still being given to comics that seemed **dormant or unpopular**. We sold Westerns, mid-grade non-key Silver Age Marvels at near-Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide, funny-animal comics, 1940s and 50s Disneys, beater DC comics, romance, Charltons, ACGs, 1940s mini-comics, Wheaties Premiums, Treasuries, comics in FN to VF grade, Digests, anything Planet Of The Apes, and a little of just about everything else.

We don't know how many people attended the show. Our guess is between 40,000 to 45,000 people. Our feeling is that only a small percentage of that attendance were hardcore back issue collectors. We tended to see the same faces from the year before and faces that returned to our booths several times throughout the show. We were disappointed that fewer "briefcase" dealers, collectors or owners were present (people trying to make a little money by bringing comics to the dealers at the show). Few approached our booth this year. Fewer still had anything more interesting than the ubiquitous Spawn #1 or the "Death of Superman" issues!

We like the surprises that those show attendees bring around each year. We were contacted by a small number of collectors with **CGC-graded** comics, common items like Amazing Spider-Man #121. One such owner solicited us to purchase that slabbed edition from her at about four times NM Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. She pointed to a dealer near us and said he had one slabbed in the same grade for $1,000. So, she felt her offer was fair. We pointed out to her that there were NM unslabbed copies in the room at about Overstreet Guide price, a better bargain.

She told us that we could buy hers and instantly sell it for more than $800 on eBay, completely taken in by the belief that we are all going to get rich with CGC-graded comics. Ridiculous! Time and time again, we heard comments about slabbed comics as though they were the Holy Grails of profit, often from people who seemed to own comics for reasons other than pure enjoyment of the story and art between the pages.

We spoke with a lot of Gold and Silver collectors at the show. Most people seemed comfortable with the state of the back issue market (if you avoided conversation about the multiples of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide for perfect copies of just about everything!). Most understood the pricing structure we dealers utilize and simply budgeted their purchases. Others, about 1/3 of our customers, asked for **discounts**. The comic convention atmosphere brings the swap meet mentality to the show and people desire a price break. We have no problem with that—on most of our comics. Ten percent was acceptable in almost every case. A little more on some substantial Silver and Bronze Age purchases. Overall, we enjoyed the brisk business at the show. We are grateful to the business we concluded with our fellow comic dealers at the show.

Golden Age sales: All-Flash #17 GD $71; Detective #68 VG $320; Donald Duck F.C. #189 VG/F $81.

Silver Age sales: Action #252 VG+ $221; Amazing Spiderman #1 GD- $640; Amazing Spiderman #4 VG $275; Batman #194 VF $25; 80 Page Giant #7(Sgt. Rock) FN $40; Fantastic Four #1 GD+ $720; Fantastic Four #12 FN- $260; Justice League of America #1 FA/GD $160; X-Men #4 F/VF $275; Superman #149 F/VF $62.

Bronze Age sales: Amazing Spiderman #129 VF- $100; Incredible Hulk #181 F/VF $300.

RON MURRY

1304 N. Wishon Ave Apt A
Fresno, CA 93728
559-285-9751
bigroncomics@yahoo.com

Another San Diego Con come and gone. I would first like to thank the AACC coordinating staff (both of you) for doing another superb job. The ceremonies and proceeding dinner were run about as smoothly as possible. Although Joe Simon couldn't attend, the rest of the special guests were absolutely wonderful to speak with and listen to. As usual during the presentation of the awards there are a couple of heart-warming moments that bring a bit of mist to the eyes. I'm a real softy for these moments and...sniff, I think you get the picture! One of the real treats for me was the display of incredible original art celebrating **Captain America** over the decades. I would like to thank the individuals who loaned the committee these pieces from their personal collections. The art auction after the dinner was very exciting as usual. Two of the most feverishly bid-on Captain America pieces were done by the incredible Gene Colan and Don Rosa.

The comic convention itself becomes a bit more staggering every year. Each time I

would leave my booth to go shopping I ran into somebody and wound up talking for fifteen or twenty minutes and would have to squeeze back to the table and get to work. I can't believe how many people were there!

I had good sales at the show, and an auction running on **eBay** at the same time with some really high-grade early **Silver Age DC** books up that attracted quite a bit of attention. If you read my sales report you will be pretty amazed at some of the prices realized.

The people I sold to consisted mainly of: 1) A large number of people looking to buy specific items, 2) the curious wondering what they should buy, 3) speculators looking for some hidden gem they could have slabbed and triple their investment, and 4) people buying slabbed books hoping to re-slab for a higher grade and quadruple their investment.

One of the more fascinating phenomena over the past couple of years are the endless numbers of **vest-pocket dealers**, who seem to be crawling out from the woodwork these days. My friend Sal Dichera (Amazing-Adventures of San Francisco) and I stood with our jaws dropped with some of the deals offered us. Offering items for sale at prices I doubt we could sell them for, even after giving a sizable discount. I wish them the best of luck and hope they get their price. If not, my advice for them is to put it on eBay or get a table. Over the years I have come to recognize quite a number of collectors and dealers from all over the world. The vast majority of them are very nice people and it truly is a pleasure to have encountered them. Until next year, I would like to thank all of the people who made it a really great event once again.

Recent sales (all books are CGC graded): Action #254 (9.2) $546; Amazing Spider-Man #12 (9.0) $911, #13 (9.0) $935, #14 (8.5) $1,287, #23 (9.0) $627, #27 (9.0) $492, #30 (9.0) $250, #39 (9.0) $510, #43 (9.2) $256, #44 (9.2) $270, #50 (9.0) $520; Avengers #13 (9.4) $430, #18 (9.4) $291; Detective #271 (9.0) $1,034, #272 (9.4) $1,025; Fantastic Four #39 (9.4) $511, #40 (9.4) $566, #52 (9.4) $665; Flash #106 (9.0) $5,510, #111 (9.4) $4,350, #116 (9.4) $3,450, #117 (9.4) $2,955; Green Lantern #2 (9.2) $3,550, #14 (9.4) $2,750, #15 (9.2) $510; Thrilling #62 (9.4) $810; Weird Science-Fantasy #29 (9.0) $1,500; Wings #100 (9.2) Okajima Copy $428.

JOSEPH SERPICO

Classic Comic Investments
www.classiccomicinvestments.com

The dog days are here, but not for vintage comic sales!

I have been home from the San Diego Comic-Con for a few days. Here are some of my observations regarding the market. Nothing really new, generally speaking. Sales of **high-grade**, especially slabbed books, continue briskly. Price seems to be secondary for the purchaser of many of those scarce-in-grade books, or just plain hard to get in any grade.

The comic collector today is a much more sophisticated breed then just seven to ten years ago. The **Internet and CGC** have been the primary reasons. The key high-grade books are now more expensive then many first print novels, famous artwork, cards, stamps and many movie posters. Who would have ever thought that such an unappreciated art form would be elevated to such lofty heights in the secondary collectible market? And, the market keeps rolling along with no signs of abatement. It seems even when prices hit a ceiling, it will be more of a pause to regroup, than an adjustment of the market. I base this comment on the real true value (as opposed to artificial value, as witnessed in many of the dot coms in last year's stocks) in the better books. To borrow a phrase from real estate—"they just ain't makin' them anymore."

A good percentage of **pre-1964** books have at least some value, in almost any grade. The books published from 1965 to 1975-76 have value in high grade. It seems that many, many of the best books are tied up in collections, with the owners content to sit on their treasures. This is having the effect of pushing prices up further and higher for what is available. I looked and looked at comics for many hours at the con, and probably less then 10% were of investment quality GA and SA material. In the last five or so years, any high grade collections (such as Spokane, Oakland, Palo Alto, River City) have been gobbled up in short, sometimes record periods of time. What excites me is the prospect of the prices generally **trending upwards** for the short and long term. I liken current comic values to teenagers—looks grown up, but still has a long way to maturity. No offense to any teens out there! The con was successful for those who had the right books. That is, the books the buyer knew he or she was not going to see again. Those books sold well, although some dealers have them priced two years out, a little high. Anything with reasonable prices was snatched up quickly and furiously. Many books sold at the Wednesday night preview of the con by savvy collectors/investors/speculators. It seems that the next area of collecting interest is going to be very high-grade mid to late 70s, even early 80s, and unusual-esoteric, last issue/low print runs titles. I have sold some of these issues at prices of around $5-$30.

One last note regarding dealer/collector relations. I have for the most part witnessed many ethical and decent individuals transact business over the years. Lately, as prices reach critical levels, it appears as if the relationship at times is contentious and adversarial. Naturally the seller wants to maximize his profit and the buyer is trying to make the best deal for himself. Shouldn't the seller be looking for **long term business dealings** with the buyer? This is just good business sense. It can be a rewarding experience for both parties if they would just come to understand each other's motives for doing business. It's a hobby—not life or death. It should be pleasant and enjoyable. Dealers and collectors need to remember most of us came to this field because we loved it first. Why spoil it because of greed?

Here are some **sales**—all are CGC unless noted otherwise: Action #485 NM+ $29 (not CGC); Amazing Fantasy #15 APP GD+ $1325; Conan #22VF+ $27; Dagwood #124 NM $37; Fantastic Four #123 NM- $60; Flash #124 VF- $89; Green Lantern #28 NM $660; Hulk #148 NM $46; Justice League of America #6 VF $163; Shazam #14 NM $45; Strange Worlds #8 APP FN+ $69; Superman #300 NM+ $33 (not CGC), #192 NM $187, #203 NM- $97; Weird Fantasy #13 VF+ $242; World's Finest #108 VF+ $92, #83 VF- $82; X-Men #58 NM $430.

DOUG SULIPA

COMIC WORLD
Box 21986
Steinbach, Manitoba
CANADA R5G 1B5
1-204-346-3674
cworld@mb.sympatico.ca

Since the new Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide came out, it has been apparent that CGC had a big influence on pricing this year. CGC has been the rage for nearly a year now, but is finally cooling and prices

settling down to more sane levels. Buyers who bought early may now be stinging from initial High Prices. The **CGC Census** has made many buyers now set unrealistic expectations for condition. I have had several buyers tell me they buy books only if they are the highest graded copies 'from' CGC. But, be careful, as not even 1% of Pre-1980 comics are yet graded, and things can change fast. I have noted that too many copies of any CGC single issue can cause a Price Slump. For example, **X-Men** prices are lower, with many copies of Bronze New X-Men in 9.0 to 9.2 bringing closer to unslabbed Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide prices, and with 9.4 prices slowing. The biggest bargains are in the much-ignored 8.0 and 8.5 grades, which are currently consistently selling on the low side. These are beautiful books, people, look again! **Minor Restored** comics are also a major bargain, many "apparent VF" or better, selling as low as GD prices. (Rumor has it, many are being bought up, cracked from CGC case and sold as Un-Restored copies.) Many titles are becoming too common in slabbed copies, and many are not meeting reserve, or not getting bids!

Ebay is flooded with seller mistakes, such as 70s titles that grade 8.5 or less. They relist them again and again, hoping they will sell. Eventually they sump them off at well below cost. Hopefully the $3 fee to stop grading copies below a certain level should help here. To date, the most collected Post-1960 CGC comics are Big Name mainstream titles. While these have done well, we often do better with the less mainstream titles. Perhaps buyers will eventually realize that oddball, traditionally non-collected titles are far scarcer in investment grade. On other fronts, we have noted that the back issue market remains very strong and perhaps even growing.

The **Internet** has brought a large influx of dormant collectors and overseas buyers. On the flipside to CGC, we have found "reading copies" are in huge demand. Many see the huge price spread between GD and NM, and are having a great time getting 10-20 or more lowgrade books for the price of one high-grade! It is interesting to note, that the back issue market is becoming more and more a separate entity from the new comic market. Most buyers collect either new only or old only, with only a few splitting their buying dollar in both markets. It is entirely probable that the back issue market would remain strong, even without the existence of new product.

We have found that almost everything from **1960-1985** sells well in most grades. Thus the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide seems to be doing an excellent job. The slowest selling comics from **1940-1970** seem to be Walt Disney and Dell/Fawcett Westerns in above FN condition. Most buyers seem to prefer GD or VG copies. But, Disneys that are not over-reprinted still sell regularly. Dell/Fawcett Westerns sell great in affordable grades.

Perhaps the GD prices are too low, and NM prices too high? This is mainly the result of the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide **price spread** being too large. 11-1 average is too big a spread. We see an 8-1 spread being more accurate. This has been a great year for filling in want lists consisting of gaps in collectors' long runs. We have sold a lot of copies of Archie, Dennis the Menace, Harvey, Charlton, Gold Key, Atlas/Seaboard and Warren.

Our single biggest selling genre of late, has been all **Horror** comics by all publishers. The 70s Marvel reprint Horror titles (Dead of Night, Beware, etc) have been the most requested, and especially in "reading copy" grades. Warren has made a big comeback in demand. All the early issues like Creepy #1-30 and Eerie #2-30 once were plentiful on the market, as a result of the Warren warehouse copies being dumped on the market in the early 1980s. But now, 20 years later, most are in permanent collections, not in dealer hands. Also, the middle numbers, like Creepy/Eerie #40-70 have always been in lower supply, but no one has ever noticed. The last 10-15 issues in each of the Creepy, Eerie and Vampirella runs remain in low supply (these had low print runs, with massive distributor return rates of 80-90% of the print run). In all likelihood, this strongly contributed to the collapse of Warren. Now, with many returning buyers filling in their runs, these issues remain elusive. The common issues can often fool you into thinking all issues are common, and this simply is not the case. Skywald Mags (Psycho, Nightmare, Scream) have almost disappeared from the market. They had less of the big name artists, but made up for it in great stories. There is a growing cult following for the great Al Hewetson-scripted Nightmare. Number 20 is by far the most requested issue for the Byrne art and sells at two to three times Overstreet Guide, if you can find it. High numbers remain scarce!

We have seen a growing number of requests for 1980s and 1990s **independents**, if based on famous characters, writers or artists. Especially titles with ERB, REH, Tolkien, Horror adaptions, Adams, Byrne, Pulp Heroes (Doc Savage, Shadow, etc), Cartoons (TV, Felix,Simpsons, etc), 3-D titles, and Manga. Most of these have low print runs and may well be the highly prized items of the future!

Everything in oddball formats continues to move well for us, including digests, treasuries, paperbacks and magazines. There is a growing market for promo items like posters, handout flyers, dealer- and distributor-only items. We got in a large collection of Platinum Age titles, mostly low grades, but still nice to see. So far, the more common titles (and better known?) are selling best such as Little Orphan Annie and Mutt and Jeff. I certainly enjoyed the expanded section in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. These remain a real bargain, when one looks at scarcity compared to newer items. The Bronze Age remains the strongest market, although Silver Age is picking up again. It mostly has to do with prices. We still believe that 90% of back-issue buyers buy only comics priced at **$50 and under**. Most collectors do not care if comics are in CGC 9.0 or better condition. All the attention always goes to the Big Ticket items, yet most of the volume of real cash activity is in affordable items. I am happy to see much more written on the Bronze Era in CBM, Comic Book Artist and other mags. The Silver Age era has been over-scrutinized. It is amazing that only a few years back, the Overstreet Price Guide stated that all 1970s comics are common in NM.

I am still surprised that two Bronze **USA Horror Mag** titles are still not listed in Overstreet. For the record, the issues known to exist are: (1) Terrors of Dracula V1 #3 (5/79), #4 (8/79), #5 (11/79); V2 #1 (2/80), #3 (8/80); V3 #2 (9/81) and (2) Weird Vampire Tales V3 #1 (4/79), #2 (7/79), #3 (10/79), #4 (1/80); V4 #2 (4/80), #3 (7/80); V5 #1 (1/81), #2 (8/81), #3 (3/82).

TOM GORDON

Monumental Collectibles
P.O. Box 295
Reisterstown, MD 21136
410-848-0275
want@monumentalcollectibles.com

We are back from attending this year's San Diego Comic Con. The show is something every collector should attend.

THE MARKET

Although one has the opportunity to see and purchase many items, it is also a great place to meet other collectors. Besides attending the con I also attended the AACC dinner. The dinner was a great event, which featured an amazing Captain America art exhibit in honor of his 60th anniversary. Some who attended the dinner included Gene Colan, John Romita Sr and John Romita Jr, George Tuska, J, Marie Severin, Maggie Thompson, and many more. For those of you who did not get to attend the show, you can see a few of the highlights at http://www.monumentalcollectibles.com/web/announce/annoufrm.htm

CGC graded books are continuing to sell well. We tend to sell more restored books that are not CGC graded than those that are CGC graded. It appears that the collectors buying restored books want to handle them and perhaps even read them. Golden Age comics are continuing to sell well in all grades and we are still seeing interest in those "cheaper" books that are priced under $400. I know of several long-time collectors who are buying these books in high grade. When you consider how scarce high-grade Golden Age books are, many appear to be a bargain compared to their Silver Age counterparts.

Silver Age is selling well with the lower-grade material moving when priced at or slightly below Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. High-grade Silver Age books are continuing to sell for above Overstreet Guide. Premiums and Character Toys are selling well across the board. We have seen a slowdown in certain characters—this may be due to a lack of new collectors. The area we see the most affected currently is that of **Western collectibles**. Is it possible that the cowboy greats of the past are slowly being forgotten? Only time will tell, but this appears to be a slight trend in certain types of collectibles. Could it be possible that at some point in the future people will forget about certain characters? I hate to imagine that such a thing could happen, but unless people see things on a regular basis they tend to forget them. Toys continue to be slowing down as eBay continues to have larger and larger quantities of specific collectibles. The toy prices continue to be affected by the large supply that is now available 24 hours a day. Some people are learning the difficult lesson of supply and demand, as many of these items do not bring the high prices that they brought several years ago. The Internet has taken some of the impulse buying out of the shows as people tend to compare prices more and look for a "deal." I frequently hear people at shows saying "I saw this yesterday on Ebay and it was $20 cheaper!" This is yet another factor in the ever-changing collectibles market. The lesson appears to be that prices and demand change on a consistent basis.

Golden Age sales: Four Color #1206 Dell File Copy NM $20; Pep Comics Speed Comics PR $128.

Character Toys and Premiums sales: Dick Tracy Junior Celluloid Button $250; Hopalong Cassidy Compass Ring $125; Shirley Temple Face Ring $178; Star Wars Power of The Force Jawa MOC $72.25.

DAN and KIM FOGEL, JIM PITTS

Hippy Comix, Inc.
PO Box 20474
El Sobrante, CA 94820-0474
(510) 758-0688
hippycomix@aol.com

Greetings from Hippy Comix, Inc., the retailers/publishers formerly known as the Comic Detectives. In this space we will focus on the neglected but re-emerging genre of **Underground Comix**. For our mainstream comics report, we refer you to the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide, 32nd Edition.

A brief disclaimer: while we publish and distribute some of the top current Underground titles (including Cherry, Kieron Dwyer's Lowest Comic Denominator, and UG!3K), we sell many out-of-print, back-issue Undergrounds ("Ugs"). Also, we have begun production on The Hippy Comix Underground Price Guide First Edition 1962-2002. Paul Mavrides (Grass: The Movie, Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers) is providing the front cover, and an international conspiracy of publisher, retailer and collector advisors have been helping us amass info. If any CBM readers would like to join the cause, feel free to e-mail or snail mail us any prices realized or prices paid to the address above. We will be happy to give credit and other perks to contributors.

This month, we will give a brief definition of Ugs and an overview of the current market. In future installments, we will delve into the creative, retail and distribution history of the genre and provide sales data.

We define Ugs as personal, uncensored comic book stories and art, usually creator-owned and/or self-published. Designed to provoke emotion or thought, Ugs contain some or all of the following attributes: graphic sex, violence, language, and political and social commentary. We would estimate that over 90 percent are in black and white, and have relatively small print runs. **Major creators** and their titles in the genre include: Robert Crumb (Zap Comix, Mr. Natural), Gilbert Shelton (Freak Brothers, Wonder Wart-Hog), Vaughn Bode' (Cheech Wizard, Gothic Blimp Works), Larry Welz (Cherry), Trina Robbins (Wimmen's Comix, East Village Other), S. Clay Wilson (Pork, Checkered Demon), Spain Rodriguez (Trashman, Zap Comix), Rick Griffin, Victor Moscoso, Robert Williams (Zap Comix, many famous Rock posters), Guy Colwell (Doll), Peter Bagge (Hate), Daniel Clowes (Eightball, Ghost World), and the Hernandez Brothers (Love and Rockets).

Current publishers of Ugs include: Fantagraphics/Eros, Last Gasp, Rip Off Press, Drawn and Quarterly, Cherry Comics, Carnal Comics, Top Shelf Comix, Slave Labor Graphics and the shameless self-promoters at Hippy Comix, Inc.

Perhaps the major difference between Ugs and mainstream comics, besides the adult content and general lack of color, is that many titles are kept in print continuously. This follows more of a book-selling model and less of periodical distribution. In our next installment we will discuss the origins of Ugs and their early publishing history, and the distribution revolution they spearheaded, leading to the modern Direct Market. Until next month—**Keep on Truckin'**!

Recent sales: Artistic #nn VF- $5; Freak Brothers #3 (1st) MT $20.50; Mr. Natural #3 VF $10; Short Order #1 FN $12; Skull #6 FN $5; Snarf #5 (1st) VF $7; Two-Fisted Zombies #5(#1) VF/NM $5.50; Yellow Dog #18 (1st) FN/VF $8, #19 (1st) FN $11, #20 (1st) FN $11, #21 FN- $5, #24 (1st) VF $6; Zap #0 35¢ cov (4th) VF $7.50, #1 35¢ cov (3rd) VF $18.

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 28

BALTIMORE COMIC-CON

GUESTS

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